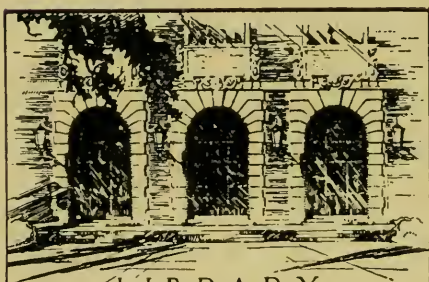




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THE GREY FRIAR,
AND THE
BLACK SPIRIT OF THE WYE.

A ROMANCE.

Lane Darling, and Co. Leadenhall-Street.

Eliza Giffard (*Marquis*
THE *Huntsshire*
GREY FRIAR,

AND THE

Black Spirit of the Wye:

A ROMANCE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

JOHN ENGLISH, ESQ.

OF BLACKWOOD HALL.

The mind cannot rest satisfied with reality, but gladly forsaking philosophy for fiction, wanders with pleasure and delight into the wild universe of conjecture.

LIPSCOMB'S MATLOCK.

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THE
GREY FRIAR,
AND THE
BLACK SPIRIT OF THE WYE.

CHAP. I.

BERNWOOD Forest was the western extremity of that immense track of woodland, which, in the early ages of British history, is recorded to have extended from the Kentish coast, in an oblique direction, more than a hundred and fifty miles westward. It included a considerable part of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire; and, even long since civilization and culture

VOL. I.

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have given new features to the country, has afforded a striking contrast to the fertility of the surrounding district, in the peculiar wildness of its scenery.

Large tracks of land lying open and uncultivated, and extensive woods, in which the scathed heads of the decaying oak claim the proud distinction of ancient pre-eminence, still mark the boundaries of the Forest, although its name has been long lost among the inhabitants of the neighbouring hamlets.

The family of Bolebec numbered among their vast possessions several castles, of considerable strength and importance, in various parts of Britain. One of them, if not the most ancient, certainly the most magnificent, was situated in Bernwood Forest, and denominated Glandon Tower. This edifice had for ages belonged to the same illustrious race.

Their prowess in war, and hospitality in peace, were universally acknowledged ; and the faithful attachment of their vassals and

dependants was not only secured by the confidence which distinguished valour as a chieftain naturally inspires during warfare, but animated into enthusiasm by his paternal regard for them, in seasons of tranquillity and peace.

Few of those nobles whose heroic deeds illumine the rolls of fame have had a better claim to the admiration of posterity than the house of Bolebec. Descended from the Kings of Mercia, the examples of their illustrious progenitors seem to have inspired them with a becoming emulation to rival their valour and their worth.

In an age when science only began to dawn, and the softer virtues were but little cultivated, the benignity of their generous nature was the more conspicuous; and while tyranny and despotism were too generally the sinews of power, the Bolebecs established in the hearts of their dependants a principle of love, attachment, and fidelity, which rendered them alike invincible by open violence or secret machinations.

nations. They were thus ranked among the most powerful subjects of the monarchy—formidable on account of their virtues, as well as their valour, and the extent of their possessions.

Whilst the habitations of the nobles afforded, in general, a dreary or melancholy scene of gloomy pomp or revengeful cruelty, Glandon Tower exhibited a pleasing picture of social life. Its security did not so much consist in the solidity of its walls, the height of its battlements, or the formidableness of its bastions, as in the attachment of the neighbouring foresters to their liege Lord, which was indeed an impregnable defence. Instead of a dismal fortification, suggesting to all who approached it the horrid idea of chains, imprisonment, and torture, it might be reckoned among those hospitable mansions of ancient English grandeur,

“ Where thronging Knights and Barons bold,
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold ;”

“ where,”

“ where,” to use the language of chivalry, “ the wandering knight or distressed damsel found a willing reception and generous entertainment, the hoary palmer repose for his weary limbs, and the poor mendicants their daily bread.”

Such was Glandon Tower, and such the character of its possessors.

At a very early period of life, Sir Hugh de Bolebec had distinguished himself among those patriotic nobles who laid the foundation of English liberty, by obtaining the great charter at Runny Mead, at which solemnity he was present, with his father, Sir Arthur; and having married the daughter of the brave Earl of St. Clair, made Glandon Tower his principal residence; and here, in conjunction with some of his powerful neighbours, devised a plan for settling the government in the troublesome reign of Henry the Third, when the supreme authority had been wrested from the hands of that irresolute monarch, by the turbulent Barons.

The insolence of these haughty nobles, who having procured a convention to be assembled at Oxford, for the redress of grievances, usurped a domination, which proved far more oppressive to the people than the extravagance or caprice of the King, induced the Earl of Gloucester, Alfred St. Clair, and others, to exert their influence and authority in re-establishing the power of Henry, and relieving their unfortunate fellow-subjects from the despotism of an oligarchy, which threatened the complete subjugation of the liberties of the kingdom. In this conjuncture, anxious for the public weal, they resolved to obtain the assistance of Prince Edward, whose vigour of intellect and personal bravery afforded the happiest presages of his future glory.

The young Prince, who had but just reached maturity, was at first diffident in entering upon so arduous and dangerous an undertaking; but, at length, a high sense of honour and philanthropy, and a becoming deference for the wisdom and experience

experience of those who were his advisers, engaged him in their plan: and once resolved, he pursued it with all the eagerness and zeal of a youthful, an ardent, and generous mind, equally above dissimulation and a stranger to fear.

It was at this period when the Lady Bolebec, after an interval of several years from the birth of her only daughter, presented to her affectionate Lord an infant son. An event which had been long and anxiously desired, afforded universal satisfaction. The delight of the fond parents was inexpressible; and the noble mansion of Glandon Tower, notwithstanding the perturbed state of the country at that time, exhibited a scene of uninterrupted festivity for several days.

Hospitality, which is usually most cultivated in countries the least polished, and in times the most turbulent, was the prevailing and distinguished virtue of that age; and the fortunes, the disposition, and splendor of the house of Bolebec, all concurred

in prompting them, on this happy occasion, to emulate, if not to exceed their contemporaries, in a display of magnificence, such as had been seldom witnessed. The spacious hall re-echoed to the tabor and the harp, and the joyful rebec's sound; while the capacious board, covered with the richest and most costly viands, and the exhilarating goblets circling in quick succession, invited to luxurious indulgence every passing stranger, as well as every inhabitant of the vicinity of Glandon Tower. Gladness sparkled in every eye, and the welcome guests united their congratulations on the birth of an heir to the family of Bolebec, with their good wishes for the health and preservation of the munificent host.

In the midst of these rejoicings, Prince Edward arrived at Glandon Tower, accompanied by the Earl of Gloucester, with a numerous train of attendants. The Prince was received with every demonstration of respect and attachment by Sir Hugh de Bolebec; and after a conference had been held

held respecting public affairs, and the measures necessary to be pursued, in order to ensure success to the enterprise in which they were about to engage, greeted his loyal entertainer, with the warmest congratulations on the birth of his son, and condescended to assist in the ceremony of giving to the infant his own name of Edward.

The young Prince, surrounded by his faithful friends and counsellors, experienced and expressed the liveliest satisfaction at the generous hospitality of Hugh de Bolebec, and departed, to join the forces raising in Gloucestershire, whither Bolebec and his brother-in-law, the Earl of St. Clair, were speedily to follow him, at the head of their numerous dependants.

The liberty of his country was to him a sovereign law, and every partial and private claim instantly vanished, when his native land and the interests of his Prince, called for his assistance. It was not without reluctance, however, that he quitted his man-

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sion, and the domestic comforts he enjoyed in the society of an affectionate consort, and the innocent and entertaining converse of the gentle Isabella, his beautiful daughter; and although the infant Edward was at that time too young to attract much attention, the natural solicitude of parental tenderness inclined Sir Hugh to watch, with peculiar emotion, every change of feature in the little innocenc, and every dawning of sensibility which beamed in his eye.

In ten days after the departure of Prince Edward, the standard of Bolebec had been joined by more than a thousand men, who appeared to be inspired with the same valour that animated their brave leader, manifesting the most determined resolution to support him in the enterprise which he had undertaken. After taking an affectionate leave of his Lady and domestics, Sir Hugh proceeded, at the head of this gallant company in martial array, to join the army at the appointed place of rendezvous.

The

The feudal times were alike unfavourable to the cultivation of science, and dangerous to domestic comfort. Wealth and power have been, in every age, almost synonymous;—in those times they were truly so. Power constituted riches, and the plunder of the defenceless or unprotected was considered a kind of prowess, which, however barbarous, was far from disgraceful. There was no idea of virtue attached to compassion or humanity; and even the severest cruelties were overlooked, in the boldness of the enterprises which led to them, or the courage displayed in their execution.

This accounts for the savage practices of that era, and the ravages which were daily committed on each other, by contending chieftains; it produced the most distressing consequences, and gave rise to those stratagems of reprisal and revenge, which were executed without compunction, even in seasons of peace, and in direct violation of the most solemn engagements.

Hugh de Bolebec had no sooner left his residence at Glandon Tower, than the gates were formally closed, and the drawbridges properly secured. The household attendants of Bolebec followed in his train, to witness and assist in deeds of arms. Only a few superannuated men-servants remained at the Tower, besides the female attendants of Lady Bolebec and her children.

The situation of Glandon Tower was in a valley, and it was so completely surrounded by thick woods, that only the summit of its hoary battlements was visible at any considerable distance from the site of the building; and the approach of an enemy was of course equally hidden from those who inhabited it.

A nobleman so rich and powerful as Hugh de Bolebec, was naturally regarded by his political opponents with a degree of envy and jealousy, at least proportionable to the attachment of his friends; and as these are much stronger passions than love and gratitude, and incalculably more generally

nerally diffused, the dangers to which his family was exposed became very imminent, whenever the faithful vassals by whom his dwelling was encompassed were called from their homes. The most sedulous precautions were requisite to prevent the Tower from being surprised by an enemy, or entered by stratagem. If its security, on the one hand, might have been promoted by a greater force to resist an attack from without, its danger would, on the other, have been vastly increased by the chances of treachery within. Little, indeed, was required but to maintain the strictest vigilance, and prevent the admission of strangers; for the immense thickness of the walls, the depth of the moat, and the strength of the portcullises, bade defiance to any ordinary attack; whilst the quantity of provisions with which its stores were furnished, was sufficient for the inhabitants during a regular siege.

The daily allowances of meat and drink for the sustentation of the poor, was made
through

through a casement or loophole, at the principal entrance of the mansion; and a bugle-horn, attached to a pillar at the gate, gave notice of the approach of every visitor.

The turbulence of this period interrupted even the usual intercourses of society; and a few preaching friars, who were permitted to wander from their convents to procure subsistence for themselves, and subscriptions in support of their order, were the only travellers, at a time when the sanctity of the clerical character was the only safeguard from violence, among a lawless and contending people, divided between an implicit regard for the arbitrary power of the Sovereign, and an equally blind attachment to the fortunes of those who took up arms in direct opposition to his authority. The monks were indeed the only intelligencers and the only medium of intercourse between different parts of the country. Their behaviour, too, was in general correct, and their manners inoffensive.

All

All the little learning of that period was obtained through the same channel; but the cultivation of letters formed only a very small portion of the business of life, when war and the chase occupied almost the whole time, and were the principal employments of those who were not compelled by hunger and poverty to till the ground, or gather its produce, and when the only reading consisted in monkish legends, while devotion was insisted upon as a mystic rite, to be performed with awful and submissive exactness, without one word of inquiry into those sublime mysteries, of which the priests represented themselves to be the sacred depositaries.

In a short time after the departure of Sir Hugh de Bolebec, as before related, it was observed that a Grey Friar frequently appeared at the entrance of Glandon Tower, among the crowd of mendicants who daily resorted thither, to partake of the provisions which were distributed there, according to the fashion of those times, without inquiry

inquiry or remark. As the order to which his habit indicated that he belonged was generally known to be very wealthy, a repetition of the visits of the Friar excited some degree of curiosity in the attendants who were employed to dispense the bounty of their absent Lord ; and as he seemed to examine the approaches to the Tower with a scrutinizing eye, and always quitted the spot with evident reluctance, some apprehensions began to be entertained respecting the real motives for his frequent and almost constant visits. It was at first conjectured that he belonged to a religious house, which was situated at a few miles from Glandon Tower, on the borders of the Forest ; and that he was performing a sort of penance, to which the monks of the same establishment had often submitted, by taking up his abode at a hermitage in the vicinity. This hermitage or cell was a subterraneous cave, extremely dismal and damp, situated in one of the most intricate recesses of the Forest, and enclosed by
sombrous.

sombrous oaks, whose vast branches formed a magnificent portico at the entrance. High amidst the trellis-work of this stupendous piece of natural architecture, rooks innumerable

“built their airy city,
And ceaseless caw'd amusive.”

A tinkling rill, gently descending from a rock of granite, had worn a passage in the living stone, at the door of the hermitage; and to a rude and natural bason was attached an iron ladle, on which was inscribed, “Drink, and be thankful.” The flowering heath and variegated moss which covered the sides and roof of the cell, presented the only objects to divert the mind amidst the gloom of the surrounding thickets, rendered still more dreary by a mixture of the melancholy yew with the closely-intertwining branches of the holly, and the mountain-pine.

In the cell was a stone table, a bench rudely formed out of the stump of a decayed
oak,

oak, an altar hewn out of the rock, and a small crucifix. These, with a bed of rushes, in a recess at the farthest side of the cave, constituted the miserable furniture of the dismal habitation to which the monks of Studely were wont to retire, whenever the practice of unusual austerities was deemed essential to their spiritual advantage—or, in other words, whenever it was thought necessary, by their superiors, that they should expiate any irregularities of behaviour, or neglect of their accustomed devotions, by rigid abstinence, and complete seclusion from worldly intercourse.

Here, amidst the humidity of a gloomy cave, destitute of everything which can make life desirable, the excluded monk passed his melancholy hours in penitence and prayer, until, having accomplished the days of probation, he was again restored to the enjoyment of social intercourse and the privileges of his order.

The Friar, whose presence at Glandon Tower had occasioned some uneasiness, having

having been observed to bend his course towards the hermitage, gave rise to the idea before hinted at. The Lady Bolebec, however, who could not but consider the frequency of his visits, and the peculiarity of his manner, as at least suspicious, caused a strict inquiry to be made among the cottagers in the neighbourhood; and the intelligence which she obtained by no means tended to diminish the apprehensions that he was an instrument of mischief. One of the verdurers of the Forest had the curiosity to trace his footsteps, as he saw him slowly proceeding along a narrow path, which led towards a cottage, in an obscure part of the Forest.

Having arrived at the hut, he cast his eyes wistfully around, as if afraid of detection; and then hastily entering the cottage, closed the door immediately. The forester, who had stood at a distance unobserved among the trees, approached in silence; but how great was his astonishment, when, just as he had reached a thicket, which

which concealed the cottage from the path that led towards the next hamlet, two horsemen, clad in green vests, richly ornamented with silver embroidery, galloped up close to the spot where he stood, and, alighting from their horses under a large tree, disappeared in a moment.

The rustic was so much astonished at an incident so uncommon, that it was some time before he recovered himself sufficiently to reflect on the manner in which the strangers had effected their instantaneous concealment. He felt confident that they could not have entered the cottage, for the place where they alighted was at least a dozen yards distant from it; and he did not perceive any covert or hiding-place, which could have so suddenly secluded them from his view.

He hesitated a few minutes, in doubt whether he should attempt to gain admission into the cottage, or proceed in search of the strangers, of whom he had so instantaneously lost sight; but as their horses remained

remained standing under the branches of the elm, he concluded, that whatsoever might be the reason of this singular visit to so sequestered a spot, the travellers would not make any considerable stay there; and therefore determined to remain in the thicket, and await the issue of an adventure which seemed to promise extraordinary consequences. In about half an hour, the cottage door was opened, the horsemen mounted their steeds, in a moment, and instantly set out at full speed. The forester now no longer entertained any doubt that the visit of the strangers had been made to monk whom he had just before seen enter the cottage. Desirous, therefore, of being satisfied on this head, curiosity prompted him to endeavour to gain admittance there also. He first knocked gently at the door; but no one answering, he lifted up the latchet, and the door opening, his astonishment was much increased to find the hut completely empty. He had seen the Friar enter by this very door, and he had
also

also seen the strangers come out at it. It is true, he had not perceived them entering ; but there was no other door to the cottage ; and, however extraordinary it was that the Friar should have eluded his sight, he felt convinced in his own mind that he must have taken his departure at the moment when his own attention was engaged by the two horsemen, on their leaving the wood.

The cottage consisted of three apartments, opening into each other ; it had been long uninhabited, and, in this neglected state, served only as an occasional shelter for cattle. The only indication of any human being having lately visited it, was a bundle of fern and heath, which appeared to have been carelessly thrown into the innermost apartment. The forester found his perplexity increase, as he ruminated on the scene which had just passed before his eyes, and, long before he reached his own habitation, had begun to fancy that the whole was an illusion ; but the time of
day,

day, and the distinct view which he had both of the monk and the horsemen, concurred to remove any doubts respecting the reality of a scene, which, in spite of the evidence of his senses, he could scarcely avoid entertaining.

On his return to the hamlet, he met with Stephen, an old and confidential servant of Lady Bolebec, who had been dispatched from Glandon Tower to procure some intelligence, if possible, respecting the Grey Friar, who had, of late, been seen so often strolling about the mansion.

Stephen, who had been a faithful domestic in the family during more than half a century, and attached to his master by every tie of gratitude and affection, had himself first noticed the unusual curiosity and minute attention with which the monk seemed to examine the approaches to Glandon Tower every time he came thither. He had observed also that his appearance ill accorded with the habit he wore. He was young and active, apparently in the
vigour

vigour of life, and as evidently a stranger to the austerity and privations of the class of persons whose garb he had assumed. These circumstances having awakened his suspicions, they were immediately communicated to Lady Bolebec; and a repetition of the Friar's visits determined her to make some inquiry respecting his real character and condition. For this purpose, Stephen had called upon almost every cottager in the neighbourhood; but the only account he could obtain was, that the monk had usually taken the path which led towards the hermitage, although he had never been seen to enter it; that when he came to Glandon Tower, it was by an opposite road; and that, although he had daily intermixed with those who attended there, for the purpose of receiving alms, he had never exchanged a single word with any of them, not even the common salutation with which it was usual for those of his order to greet every one who approached them.

The forester hastened to inform Stephen
of

of the extraordinary incidents he had witnessed; and they immediately agreed to lay the particulars before Lady Bolebec, and receive her instructions respecting the plan they should pursue to unravel so mysterious an affair. It was evident, from the dress and appearance of the horsemen who had been seen in the wood, that they were above the ordinary rank; but for what purpose they had visited that remote spot, and in such apparent haste, or why they came thither in broad day-light, if the object of their journey required concealment, was perfectly unintelligible.

Their visit was evidently connected, in some way, with the appearance of the Friar at the Tower; but, at present, it was as impossible to form any probable conjecture respecting its object or intention, as to account for his sudden disappearance in the wood, when he seemed to vanish from the sight of the forester, like one of those fleeting and unsubstantial vapours “drawn from an evening cloud.”

The Lady Bolebec's anxiety, on account of the perils to which her beloved Lord was exposed, had been greatly increased, by the arrival of a messenger from her brother, the Earl of St. Clair, then serving in the forces under the command of Sir Hugh de Bolebec, who bore the rank of Lieutenant-General; by this communication, she was informed that the partisans of Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, were advancing, in great force, with intention to give battle to the King's army, and that his emissaries were distributed through that part of the country, in order to seize by stratagem some of the strongest castles.

Lady Bolebec had scarcely dismissed the messenger who had brought to her this unwelcome news, when Stephen and the forester requested admittance, and disclosed their marvellous tale. She listened with great attention to the narrative; and as she had no other person whom she could consult, capable of affording her any advice on the occasion, she did not hesitate to
acquaint

acquaint her faithful attendants with the intelligence she had received, and the additional cause of alarm which it had excited—"Without doubt," said she, "the horsemen, be they whom they may, are emissaries employed by Montfort, either to procure information, or to devise some scheme for surprising and gaining possession of Glandon Tower; and the pretended monk is certainly one of the accomplices."

After some deliberation, it was resolved to dispatch a letter to the Prior of Studley, describing, as exactly as possible, the person, stature, and countenance, of the monk, and requesting him to endeavour to ascertain whether any person answering such a description belonged to his society.

It was plain that the suspected person was not one of the preaching friars before mentioned, for he had avoided any association with the cottagers, never attempted to address the people, and maintained a profound silence, even when surrounded by mendicants at the gate of Glandon
c 2 Tower;

Tower; the only acknowledgment he ever made in return for the manchet he almost daily received there, being a slight inclination of the head and a wave of the hand.

As the return of the messenger was not expected before the next day, Lady Bolebec contented herself with securing the gates of the mansion in the completest manner; and having seen them carefully locked, took the keys into her own possession.

Before she retired to her apartment, this heroic woman summoned to her presence the whole family, and, after explaining the reasons which inclined her to believe that an attack on Glandon Tower was meditated by the enemy, exhorted them all to the utmost vigilance, and encouraged their fidelity by the promise of rewards. Lady Bolebec then retired to rest, conscious of having worthily performed the duties of an affectionate wife, zealous to maintain the honour of her husband, and the illustrious house to which she belonged, and having exhibited an example of fortitude
and

and magnanimity worthy of the stock whence she sprang—a family of which it might be truly said, “that all the sons were valiant and all the daughters virtuous.”

CHAP. II.

EARLY the next morning, the messenger who had been sent to Studley Priory returned with a letter from the superior, in which he assured the Lady Bolebec that none of the monks belonging to his establishment were at that time absent, nor had been so during the preceding week; but that one of the fraternity had been cruelly stripped of his habit, as he was returning to the Priory from Godstowe, about twelve days before: that, as this circum-

stance might possibly afford some clue for the detection of the supposed monk, whose presence had occasioned the inquiry made by Lady Bolebec, he was induced farther to particularize, that the atrocity above mentioned was committed by a banditti of armed men, who seemed more intent on obtaining the monk's clothes than desirous of any other booty; for, on his humble entreaty not to be left in so miserable a condition, and quite naked, they had given him a silk vest, of more intrinsic value than the habit of which they had deprived him. He said that two of them were remarkably well mounted, and that they all had a martial appearance. The prior concluded with a fervent prayer for the protection of the Lady Bolebec and her family, and an offer of any services or assistance in his power, as a grateful return for the patronage which had been afforded to himself, and the benefits bestowed upon his order, by the house of Bolebec.

The Grey Friar came as usual, and, as
usual,

usual, was relieved. Stephen, who had received the orders of his Lady to watch all his motions, had ascended a turret at the angle of the building, where, unperceived by any one, he could notice the behaviour of the monk. The customary loaf was distributed through the portcullis, the supplicants withdrew, and the monk alone remained, for a few minutes, looking earnestly at the postern-gate, which communicated with a small garden inclosed within the walls of the Tower.

A narrow bridge of wood crossed the moat to this gate; but the chains were drawn up, and properly secured; and the projecting gables above the arch, from which a portcullis descended, strongly implated with iron, frowned defiance at every assailant.

The monk appeared to survey the spot with peculiar attention, and then pursued his walk towards that part of the forest to which he had been traced by Norman the verdurer. Stephen descended from the

turret, and followed him at a distance. Norman, who had also received private instructions from Lady Bolebec, had already placed himself, as if by accident, with a bill-hook in his hand, (and habited like one of the persons employed to cut down branches from the trees for the deer to browse upon), near the cottage which had been visited by the unknown horsemen.

The monk walked steadily along, till perceiving Norman, he suddenly turned aside into a winding path which led round the cottage, and, still watched by Stephen, directed his steps towards the hermitage; and having arrived there, sat down composedly at the table, in a posture of serious meditation.

Stephen, who was not deficient in penetration, did not fail to observe that the pretended monk neglected the performance of an act of devotion, which amongst friars was always customary, whenever they entered a room in which there was a crucifix. He was not surprised, however, at such

such an omission on the part of one whom he now regarded rather as a robber than a priest; but it convinced him that the person whom he saw was an impostor.

Norman remained near the cottage, for his business was to ascertain, if possible, whether any, or what description of persons resorted to it; but no one appeared. He entered the cottage, which was exactly in the same desolate state in which he had seen it the day before, excepting that the bundle of fern had been removed. On approaching the place where it had lain, his astonishment exceeded all description, to perceive a gloomy descent, which before had been concealed from view, and seemed to lead to a subterraneous apartment.

Norman, although he had distinguished himself as a soldier, and fought and bled in the service of his country, in the Barons' wars, during the preceding reign, was nevertheless so much alarmed at the idea of being murdered in the cavern to which this passage seemed to be the entrance, that,

without attempting to enter the cave, he immediately hastened back to Glandon Tower, to deliver an account of his discovery.

As he proceeded through the wood, rendered more and more solemn every successive moment by the evening's increasing gloom, the very breezes which fluttered among the leaves seemed to the agitated Norman like sighs of terror; and he quickened his pace involuntarily, until he had regained the beaten road which led to the Tower; and indeed had scarcely recovered his usual composure by the time he arrived there.

Stephen, who had returned about an hour before, had already recounted his adventure. As soon as the Grey Friar had taken his seat in the hermitage, Stephen posted himself behind a projecting rock, by which he was completely hidden from the object of his suspicion; but, at length, his patience being quite exhausted, he advanced, with a slow and respectful pace, to the entrance of the
6 cell,

cell, and implored a benediction. The pretended friar, arising from his seat, waved his hand thrice over the head of Stephen; and then, in a sullen and austere tone of voice, thus addressed him:—"Stranger! begone; no longer intrude on the solitude of one whose thoughts are at present engaged on matters of mighty import."

"Father," replied Stephen, "in craving your blessing, I had no intention to interrupt your meditations; but methinks the harshness of your rebuke but ill accords with the sanctity of your habit."

The monk made no reply, but, with a look of resentment and indignation, quitted the hermitage.

The sanctity of his assumed character (for the doubts entertained respecting his right to it were at present merely conjectures, unsupported by proof) deterred Stephen from farther reproaches, all the terrors of ecclesiastical censure immediately presenting themselves, to oppose the disposition which he felt to detain the monk,

and compel him to give some account of himself.

There was another obstacle; Stephen had nearly reached his seventieth year, and though as brave a man as ever trod on British ground, felt the approaching decay of corporeal vigour, while the man to whom he was opposed was in the prime of life, and of a form remarkably athletic. He was therefore content to follow the same track, at such a distance as to keep the monk constantly in view, until, by a circuitous route, he had again reached the dingle behind the cottage. Here Stephen thought it most prudent to halt, as he doubted not that Norman was still on the look-out; and as he had observed the monk frequently looking round, as if to watch his motions, the wary old man now struck out of the path, and took a different course, never once turning his face, lest he should increase the suspicions which he feared that he had already excited. He then returned home, and was much disappointed when he
found

found that Norman had seen nothing of the monk, after he first passed by him, although he had never quitted the spot, except to examine the cottage. The discovery of the subterraneous passage, however, afforded the strongest grounds for supposing that there was a secret hiding-place somewhere near the spot, which was probably the rendezvous of a party of Montfort's spies.

Lady Bolebec immediately transmitted a circumstantial detail of all the circumstances to Sir Hugh, directing her letter to the head-quarters of the Prince's army, near Gloucester, and entreated that some step might be taken towards liberating herself and the neighbourhood from their present apprehensions. She also sent a messenger to the Prior of Studley, requesting his advice and his assistance. It was her desire to cause the supposed monk to be taken into custody; but she well knew, that if it should hereafter appear that the suspected person was really in holy orders, such

such a proceeding on her part would be attended with great personal risk, and that the censures of the church (ever ready to protect even the least worthy of its ministers) might be incurred, unless the measures adopted had been previously sanctioned by the concurrence of ecclesiastical authority. Such was the reverence in which the ministers of religion were held in those days, that the proudest among those potent nobles, who scarcely condescended to submit to regal power, would not have ventured to encroach on the privileges of a churchman: and he whose haughty spirit prompted him to hurl defiance in the teeth of his Sovereign, and to raise the standard of rebellion, trembled, as it were instinctively, at the threat of excommunication, and shrunk appalled at the dread of a Papal anathema.

The Friar continued to visit the Tower; and it was observed, that during two or three succeeding days, several persons, in the dress of pilgrims, were seen forming
small

small companies, in different parts of the Forest; but as the country was at that period on the verge of a civil war, and universal confusion and alarm had seized the whole kingdom, no particular apprehensions would have been entertained for the safety of Glandon Tower, more than that of any other castellated mansions, the possession of which was always esteemed of great importance in times of public disturbance, but for the discovery which had been made by Stephen and Norman, respecting the monk, the horsemen, and the cavern at the cottage. Moreover, from the deeply-rooted enmity of Simon de Montfort to the family of St. Clair, the Lady Bolebec, who was a daughter of that noble house, well knew that she had every thing to fear, which subtilty could invent or malice execute; and her union with Hugh de Bolebec having, if possible, increased the animosity of the proud Earl of Leicester, she anticipated the utmost efforts of his inveterate hatred.

On

On the return of the messenger from Studley Priory, Lady Bolebec received an assurance, that the next day, at the hour when the pretended monk usually resorted to her mansion, proper steps should be taken to detect and punish the impostor; for although the rules of the order did not permit any interference with secular affairs, so daring a violation of ecclesiastical privilege, as that of appearing in a monastic habit, without having been regularly admitted into some convent, and taken the proper oaths, was not only cognisable by the church, but subjected the offender to the severest punishment: that, in order to effect the purpose intended, and at the same time to convince her Ladyship of his pastoral care, the prior would issue proper orders to twelve of his monks, and as many lay-brethren, who would arrive at Glandon Tower early the next morning, when he entreated that, preparatory to the act of justice which they were about to perform, they might be allowed the
use

use of the chapel for the celebration of matins.

Lady Bolebec accordingly caused everything to be prepared for the reception of her reverend visitors. The chapel, which was a noble room, with windows of painted glass, was hung with a rich suit of arras, the altar covered with cloth of gold, and numerous banners, taken in battle by the ancestors of the family, were suspended over an elevated seat for the prior, decorated with beautiful tapestry, and furnished with cushions of velvet, richly embroidered. Opposite to this throne was the gallery used by the Lady Bolebec herself, the front of which was adorned with festoons of blue velvet, laced and fringed with silver, and wrought with the arms of the family.

At break of day, the sound of the bugle at the gate announced the approach of the procession, which was received at the entrance of the Tower by the Lady Bolebec, clad in a mantle of azure silk,
bearing

bearing in her right hand a wax taper in a great silver candlestick, and in her left a string of large pearls, with a magnificent cross of diamonds appendant to it.

The sub-prior, before whom were borne a gilt cross and pastoral staff, by two priests in surplices, was clad in the habit of his order, and wore a rich cope. He approached slowly at the head of his monks, and, bowing himself reverently to the ground, at the sight of Lady Bolebec, entered Glandon Tower with his attendants. The procession passed forward immediately to the chapel, (which was illuminated with an incredible number of wax candles), each of the monks receiving a lighted taper as he marched through the cloisters.

The Lady Bolebec, with her attendants, entered the gallery by a private door. A silver bell gave notice of the solemn service, and every one being properly seated, matins were celebrated, with all the impressive solemnity of the forms of the Roman Catholic church. High mass was
said

said by the prior; and the service being ended, the procession left the chapel, and returning through the cloisters, passed into the refectory, where a sumptuous entertainment was provided. The sub-prior was served on plate, at a table by himself, at the upper end of the room, the servitors who brought in the meat chaunting as they carried it up to the table, and halting at every fifth step, as was the manner observed in the greater abbeys, such as those of St. Alban's, Reading, and Glastonbury, when the abbot dined in public, on solemn occasions. The monks and lay-brethren were served at their respective tables, with all due attention, and in a most magnificent manner.

Immediately after having partaken of the repast, the sub-prior and the six senior priests were introduced into the great chamber, where the Lady Bolebec was seated, under a canopy of state, having on her right hand her beautiful daughter, and on her left all her principal attendants, ranged in proper order,

order, in their rich liveries of green and silver. The ecclesiastics, who were equally delighted with their entertainment, and astonished at the magnificence of it, severally made their obeisances; and the superior returned thanks, in the name of his order, for the hospitality they had experienced; and after assuring Lady Bolebec of their entire devotion, withdrew, in order to effect the purpose for which their visit had been undertaken.

The prior and monks retired into a room over the great gateway. In the meantime, the lay-brethren had been conducted through a postern gate to a recess in one of the bastions, whence they were directed to issue in a body, seize the suspected person, and bring him forcibly into the Tower.

At the hour of twelve, the poor cottagers, and other inhabitants of Bernwood Forest, who daily asked alms at the gate of Glandon Tower, appeared as usual. A few casual passengers were added to the number, and

and the Grey Friar joined the group, after having perambulated the adjacent grove, and seemingly taken a survey of the moat and turret at the south-west angle, where the nature of the out-works permitted a nearer approach than on the opposite side.

A small piece of money was given to each of the mendicants, in remembrance of St. George's day; and the Grey Friar having received his manchet, was immediately accosted by two of the lay-brethren of Studley Priory, wearing the same habit as his own—"Save you, good brother of our order, whence come you this fair day?"

"I come," said he, "from Ramsay, but can no longer stay; wherefore, good brothers, farewell—I hasten on my way;" and with these words would have instantly departed; but the two monks seizing him each by an arm, insisted on bringing him into the presence of their superior.

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The prisoner at first made a desperate resistance, and having extricated his right hand from the grasp of one of his assailants, drew a dagger, which had been concealed in his bosom, and severely wounded one of the brethren ; but the rest coming up, he was immediately disarmed, bound hand and foot, and conveyed into the Tower.

The prior and the rest of the ecclesiastics being seated, the prisoner was brought before them, and commanded to give an account of his name, the name of his convent, if he really belonged to one, and the business which brought him into this part of the country. He said that he belonged to the Abbey of Ramsay, in Huntingdonshire, and was the bearer of dispatches from the abbot to Sir Humhprey Bohun of Mordeford Castle ; but that, having been met by a party of armed men, they had compelled him to exchange his own habit for that which he now wore, deprived him of his papers, and left him on the confines of
Bernwood

Bernwood Forest: that remembering to have once been sheltered from a storm by a hermit who resided in this Forest, he had, with some difficulty, discovered his abode, and that he had been constrained by the hermit to remain with him at his cell, until there should be less danger in travelling back to Ramsay: and, finally, that he had visited the gate of Glandon Tower, for the purpose of obtaining sustenance for the old hermit, as well as himself.

Many of the monks of Studley, as well as the servants of Lady Bolebec, knew that the latter part of this tale was a mere fabrication; for the hermit who formerly lived at the cell in the Forest had been many years dead, and the hermitage had never afterwards been occupied, but for the occasional mortification of penitents, chiefly belonging to the ecclesiastical establishment at Studley, and one other of the neighbouring monasteries.

But

But the pretended Friar persisted in his story with great effrontery, until he was confronted by Stephen and Norman, who severally related what they had witnessed of the behaviour of the prisoner. The prior perceiving he was greatly confused, exhorted him to make a full, free, and complete confession of the truth, in order to render to society all the recompence which it was in his power to make for the injuries he had done, and the deceit which he had practised. The monk, however, continued refractory. He was then ordered to be searched; and on examining his garments, there was found in his cowl or hood a paper written in cyphers, which, as far as it could be understood, contained instructions from Simon de Montfort, relative to a proposed plan for surprising the two fortresses of Glandon Tower and Balbroughton Castle.

It appeared that the prisoner was an officer in Montfort's army, and that he was employed for the purpose of procuring
the

the most accurate information respecting the strength and condition of the above-mentioned places: that he was to make his rendezvous in a cavern, which the writing expressly stated to have been "lately made southward of the hermitage in Bernwood Forest;" here he was to receive farther orders; and certain days were specified, when messengers would be sent to the cavern, to receive his letters, and communicate the orders by which his future proceedings were to be regulated. The name of Sir Walter Fitz-Parnell, governor of Warkworth Castle, was repeatedly introduced, and something added relative to supplies of arms, of which a depot was to be formed in the Forest; but the writing in this part appeared to have been defaced, and was become illegible.

The prior gravely asked, if he had any instructions from the Earl of Leicester to rob an ecclesiastic, or to assume the sacred garb, as a cloak for treason and hypocrisy?

The prisoner obstinately persisted in refusing to tell his name, or make any farther disclosure respecting the nature of his intercourse with Montfort; but admitted, that he had entrusted to the horsemen whom Norman had seen entering the cottage, a letter for his chieftain.

The prior told him, that the offence of which he was clearly guilty, subjected him to the undoubted vengeance of the laws; but that it was not the custom of the church to interfere in secular concerns; “and therefore,” said he, “the punishment which I shall cause to be inflicted is only to be considered as the wholesome chastisement of our holy mother, without reference to civil or martial law, to which you will be afterwards consigned.”

The six junior monks were then commanded to attend in one of the dungeons of the Tower, where the prisoner being properly secured, received at their hands the “wholesome chastisement” of three hundred stripes, with leather thongs, on his
bare

bare back, and was then committed to close custody, till the pleasure of Sir Hugh de Bolebec should be known.

The monks now preparing to return to the Priory, received at the hands of the Lady Bolebec a superb vase of massy silver, for the use of the prior, and then departed, with the same solemnity with which they had entered, chanting vespers as the procession marched slowly out of the Tower.

CHAP. III.

THE Lady Bolebec was become extremely anxious to receive some intelligence of Sir Hugh. Many days had now passed over, and every moment encreased her alarms. The messenger at length returned, with intelligence that the forces of the Earl of Gloucester had marched towards Wales, and the left wing of the army, under the command of Hugh de Bolebec, was hastening with the utmost expedition to the relief of Devizes, now invested by Montfort's forces.

Under these circumstances, it was not without difficulty that he could spare even
a small

a small detachment ; but the urgency of the case had suggested the necessity of immediate succour ; and therefore he had directed his brother-in-law, the Earl of St. Clair, who was raising a body of troops near Bristol, to proceed with as many of them as he could collect to Glandon Tower, to act as exigences might require.

Sir Hugh was so well satisfied respecting the strength of his own walls, and the prudence and resolution of his Lady, who added to all the virtues which adorn her own sex, the firmness and intrepidity of her father, the great Earl of St. Clair, that he entertained no apprehensions whatsoever of Glandon Tower falling into the enemy's hands : at the same time he knew, that it was of the utmost importance to prevent, if possible, those destructive ravages to which the defenceless families of his vassals and tenantry would be necessarily exposed, if the vindictive Montfort once established a military force in the recesses of Bernwood Forest.

Lady Bolebec, who had been incessantly occupied with her maternal and domestic duties, and the care of so important a fortress as Glandon Tower, looked forward to the arrival of the Earl of St. Clair with peculiar satisfaction, as it promised her at least considerable relief, from constant watchings and fatigue; but the discovery which had been made of Leicester's intended plan to seize the Tower had opened a fresh source of alarm, of which she thought it necessary that St. Clair should be apprized, because it might determine him respecting the number of troops he might deem it proper or necessary to bring with him.

Another messenger was therefore immediately sent to Bristol, with a letter, in which, after briefly stating that she had discovered a plot that had been laid for seizing Balbroughton Castle and Glandon Tower, and thought it of great importance that he should be informed of it, that he might accelerate his march, in order, if possible,

possible, to avoid the hazard of meeting the Earl of Leicester, who, she naturally imagined, whenever he did venture before the gates of her mansion, would make his appearance in considerable force.

On the detection of the pretended friar, Lady Bolebec admitted into the Tower a band of thirty of the neighbouring foresters, who kept guard over the prisoner, and now assisted in preparing the fortress for the reception of the Earl of St. Clair and his followers. It was one of these foresters whom her Ladyship had entrusted with the letter to her brother; but in a few hours after he had left the Tower, it occurred to her, that if any circumstances should prevent the Earl of St. Clair from accompanying his troops in person, it might be highly imprudent to admit a body of strangers within the walls. She therefore resolved to send the faithful Stephen with a secret message to her brother, by which that danger might be avoided. He accordingly set forward on a fleet courser, being en-

trusted with a scarf of sky-blue silk, embroidered with silver flowers, the work of the charming Isabella, with command to deliver it privately to the Earl himself, and request that it might be worn on his left arm, or by whomsoever should conduct the troops to Glandon, as a signal by which Lady Bolebec might know that they who approached were friends, and might be admitted without danger.

Stephen proceeded with the utmost expedition ; but as the former messenger had been dispatched at least five hours before, it seemed scarcely possible for him to arrive at Bristol until after the delivery of Lady Bolebec's letter. However, when he reached that city, the Earl of St. Clair was absent, and not expected to return until the next day, when Stephen took the earliest opportunity of delivering his message, and presenting the scarf.

St. Clair expressed some surprise that the first messenger had not yet arrived ; but being verbally informed by Stephen that
Lady

Lady Bolebec had sent him, in consequence of the detection of the monk having aroused her apprehensions of the Tower being assailed by stratagem, desired Stephen to return immediately to Lady Bolebec, in order to assure her of his assistance, as soon as circumstances would permit; in the meantime, to recommend to her to cause the Forest to be strictly watched, especially the neighbourhood of the cottage; and to endeavour to obtain, if possible, some intelligence of the intention of the enemy, from the prisoner in her custody, either by conciliation or threatenings.

Stephen took leave of the Earl, and left Bristol; but he had not travelled more than about twelve miles, when his horse trod on a sharp spike, and was so completely lamed by the accident, as to be wholly unable to proceed. He sought in vain, at the next village, for some other conveyance; but, in that age, the facilities of travelling were few, and, at that particular period, almost all the horses in the

country had been taken away, for the use of the army. Stephen was, therefore, reduced to the alternative either of remaining where he was, until the Earl of St. Clair should pass that way, or of proceeding on foot towards the place of his destination. Judging of his Lady's anxiety by his own solicitude on her account, he preferred the latter; and accordingly made the best of his way, leaving his horse behind.

About the time that the return of the first messenger might have been expected, Norman, who filled the office of chief porter, in the absence of Stephen, was awakened, at a very early hour, by the sound of the bugle-horn; and a stranger, mounted on a black palfrey, handsomely caparisoned, delivered a letter addressed to the Lady Bolebec. This letter purported to be written by command of the Earl of St. Clair, to acknowledge the receipt of Lady Bolebec's communication by the hands of the forester, and to say, that in consequence of the messenger having been
seized

seized with a sudden illness, he had caused a special courier to bring this answer, to apprise her of the approach of his advanced guard, under the command of Sir Michael Fettiplace, the writer of the letter; and stating, that the Earl himself might be expected in two or three days, with the remainder of his forces.

The Lady Bolebec, who had never before heard that Fettiplace had taken part in the war, felt some degree of surprise to find that so old and experienced a warrior was serving under the command of her brother, St. Clair, who had himself but lately taken up arms as a volunteer in Bolebec's forces; and although the young Earl was a nobleman of distinguished courage and address, she was sufficiently acquainted with military usage, to know that it was at least very unusual for a veteran warrior to place himself under so juvenile a commander. She was unable to reconcile this extraordinary circumstance with ordinary practice; but at length imagined,

that the appointment of St. Clair on this occasion must have been entirely on account of family connexions; and that he had probably requested Sir Michael Fettiplace to accompany him, on account of never having before been entrusted with so important a command.

As it was of great importance to know whether Stephen had executed his commission in safety, and as Lady Bolebec was perfectly convinced of his fidelity and zeal, she was much disappointed that he had not before returned. The courier who brought the letter from Sir Michael Fettiplace made no mention of him, and having rode off in great haste, as soon as he had delivered it, on account of having other dispatches, as he said, of great importance, which required to be immediately forwarded, there was no opportunity of making any inquiry on the subject.

In the course of the day, intelligence was brought that a party of bowmen had been seen passing through the Forest, in a
5 direction

direction leading towards Banbury ; and as Warkworth Castle, in that neighbourhood, had now a garrison under the command of Fitz-Parnell, nephew of the Earl of Leicester, it seemed probable that these bowmen were some of his partizans:—they, however, passed by Glandon Tower, without halting.

Another day had now elapsed, without any account of Stephen ; and the Lady Bolebec began to entertain serious apprehensions that he had fallen in with some straggling party of the enemy, and perhaps had been taken prisoner by them. The loss of a faithful servant would have been at any time a serious evil ; but at so critical a moment, the bare apprehension of it was highly distressing.

It was not until a late hour that Lady Bolebec retired to her chamber ; but the agitation of her mind, distracted with doubts and fears, and almost worn out with constant watchings, would not suffer her to close her eyes. While she contemplated
the

the placid countenance of her charming infant, the little Edward, who reposed by her side, in all the tranquillity of health and innocence, a stranger yet to care and sufferings, and unconscious of the dangers by which he was surrounded, the tear of maternal sensibility stole down her cheek; and she breathed a prayer to Heaven for his continual preservation. The lovely Isabella was sleeping in an adjoining chamber—her fine auburn hair, falling in ringlets on her snowy neck, presented a subject fit for the pencil of Apelles—"Possessed of such a treasure," said Lady Bolebec, "it would be an affront to the Power that bestowed it, if I should suffer my fortitude to be subdued, or my patience exhausted, by any circumstances which can possibly occur.—No! though Glandon Tower should even undergo a siege, while one stone remains upon another, the daughter of the brave St. Clair will take her stand upon the tottering ruins, and prove herself worthy of her alliance with Hugh de Bolebec."

Enthusiasm,

Enthusiasm, which is the spur of valour, and the excitement to noble actions, cannot have a stronger spring than the feelings of a virtuous parent, anxious to preserve the offspring of conjugal love. Inspired by the glorious thought, Lady Bolebec seemed to acquire fresh strength, and to be animated above all sense of personal danger; and while affection melted her heart at the hazardous enterprize in which Sir Hugh was then engaged, she felt a glow of delight at the anticipation of his success.

It was in this frame of mind that Lady Bolebec received information that Stephen was returned to the Tower: Norman, who kept watch on one of the turrets, had descried him by the light of the moon, and immediately hastened to inform the attendant of Lady Bolebec, who always caused the keys of the gates to be brought into her own apartment, before she retired to rest.

Norman was directed to admit Stephen through

through the postern. He arrived, out of breath, and greatly agitated. On his entrance into the Tower, he hastily inquired if all were safe, in a tone and manner which indicated the greatest anxiety and perturbation; and on being told that everything was perfectly secure, desired to be immediately brought into the presence of his Lady, exhorting Norman to keep the strictest look-out, and give immediate information of the approach of any one.

Stephen began his narrative by informing Lady Bolebec, that on his arrival at Bristol, he had safely delivered the scarf into the hands of the Earl of St. Clair, who in return desired him to assure her Ladyship that he would use the utmost expedition in coming to her assistance; but that, from the difficulty he had found in raising men, and the necessity which there was of employing in such a service only those on whom he could rely with confidence, he did not think it possible to arrive at Glandon Tower in less than ten days.

“ Did

“ Did you hear anything of Sir Michael Fettiplace?” said Lady Bolebec.

“ Indeed,” replied Stephen, “ I did, my Lady ; and I feared that I should not have been able to apprize your Ladyship of his intended visit.”

“ It was unnecessary,” said Lady Bolebec, “ for a courier brought me this letter yesterday morning.—But how am I to reconcile your account with my brother’s assurance, that I may expect him in three days?”

“ The Earl expressly told me the contrary,” replied Stephen—“ Pray, how did your Ladyship receive such intelligence?”

“ By the letter,” rejoined Lady Bolebec; “ and I suppose it must have been written after you left my brother ; it is dated on Tuesday.”

“ The Earl was not at Bristol,” said Stephen, with some surprise, “ on that day.”

“ Then,” continued Lady Bolebec, “ that
accounts

accounts for Sir Michael Fettiplace writing in the name of my brother."

"Is it possible," exclaimed the astonished Stephen, "that Sir Michael Fettiplace, after seizing the dispatches, should have forged the name of my Lord, the Earl, in order to impose on your Ladyship, and gain admittance into the Tower?"

Lady Bolebec was, by this time, even more astonished, if possible, than her faithful domestic, who immediately undeceived her with regard to the letter, by stating that Sir Michael Fettiplace held a command under the Earl of Leicester; and having met with the messenger who had been sent from Glandon Tower with an account of the plan which had been laid for getting possession of that fortress and Balbroughton Castle, had fabricated this letter, in reply to Lady Bolebec's communication; for the very purpose which Stephen had before suggested.

Stephen

Stephen proceeded to acquaint his Lady with the accident that prevented his return so early as he might have been expected: that, in consequence of the inability of his horse to proceed, he continued his journey on foot, and deviated from the road, in order to reach Glandon Tower by a nearer way: that he was benighted, so that he did not reach the village where he had intended to sleep, until it was very late: that on endeavouring to procure a lodging, he found every house occupied by Sir Michael Fettiplace's soldiers; and that the room in which, after much difficulty, he was permitted to sleep, was contiguous to a chamber where two of Sir Michael Fettiplace's officers lodged: that he overheard them discoursing upon Sir Michael's intention to attempt the surprise of Glandon Tower, in consequence of having intercepted a letter, which Stephen had no difficulty in conjecturing was that which the Lady Bolebec had addressed to her brother,

brother, the Earl of St. Clair. Having made this important discovery, honest Stephen almost forgot his fatigue, in the desire he felt to communicate the intelligence to Lady Bolebec. He arose at the earliest dawn of day, and, without stopping, excepting to allay his thirst, hastened, with as much speed as he could, towards Glandon Tower.

In passing the woods, on the borders of Oxfordshire, he heard some one calling to him out of a thicket; but unwilling to submit to a moment's delay, would have passed on, if the same voice, in a plaintive tone, had not a second time besought his assistance. The voice seemed familiar to his ear, and, on approaching the thicket, proved to be that of the forester who had been sent with the letter from Glandon Tower.

He had been stripped of his doublet, his shoes taken away, and himself bound fast to a tree; and the road being unfrequented,

ed, he had remained in that wretched condition two whole days, without being able to obtain his release.

The poor fellow's limbs were so much swollen by the rude bandages with which he had been tied, and the violence used in confining him, that he was in a condition very unfit for travelling. Stephen, therefore, conducted him to the nearest village, and left him under the care of a humane cottager, who promised to afford him all the assistance in his power.

The forester informed Stephen, that when on his road to Bristol, he was pursued for more than two miles by several horsemen: that suspecting, at the time he passed by them, that they belonged to the forces of the enemy, he quickened his pace, in order to escape their pursuit; and, depending on the superior speed of his horse, had endeavoured to fly from them, across the country, till, in attempting to cross a deep foss, his horse fell with him, and he was immediately secured by the troopers. On
being

being searched, the letter of Lady Bolebec was found upon him, and immediately opened by one of the persons who had pursued him, while another possessed himself of the forester's horse, and rode away with it. The person who had opened the letter put many questions to him respecting the situation of Glandon Tower, the force remaining in it, and its condition to resist an attack; and, in consequence of his refusal to afford any information on such subjects, ordered him to be stripped naked, bound hand and foot, and tied to a tree; which orders, so far as related to the latter particulars, were immediately executed, and he was left on the spot in the condition before described, until the fortunate arrival of his old acquaintance Stephen, by whom he was released.

Having finished this account of his adventures, the Lady Bolebec recommended to him to retire to rest immediately, as he appeared to be greatly fatigued. She gave immediate directions, in person, for maintaining

maintaining the security of the Tower, and resisting any attack which might be made upon it.

She very wisely foresaw, that as the plan had been hastily adopted, the success of the stratagem must depend on the secrecy and suddenness with which it could be executed. She knew that a small force would be ineffectual in any attempt upon a place so strongly fortified, and therefore thought it much more probable, that if Sir Michael Fettiplace were disappointed of immediate admission into the Tower, he would be disposed to give up the scheme, rather than to hazard a direct attack.

Glandon Tower was abundantly stored with provisions, and well stocked with weapons and ammunition of all kinds. There was a copious spring of pellucid water within the area of the barbican, and a unexhaustible well in the very centre of the building. It had three posterns, besides the principal entrance, each of them secured by a drawbridge and portcullis; and
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the height and solidity of the walls were calculated to resist the force of the most powerful engines at that time used in warfare. The assistance required by the Lady Bolebec was, as has been before stated, not for the defence of the Tower, which was too strong to be readily subdued, but for the purpose of clearing the Forest of the Earl of Leicester's troops, who, if allowed to remain there, would probably commit many depredations and atrocities.

CHAP. IV.

EARLY in the morning, the sound of the bugle gave the signal of alarm to the inhabitants of Glandon Tower; but instead of the expected enemy, it was a messenger from Sir Hugh de Bolebec, to announce the success of his arms, in having thrown a considerable reinforcement into the Devizes, and, in co-operation with the troops of Sir Humphrey Bohun, driven the besiegers from their attack; and that he was then in pursuit of the fugitives, who had directed their course towards the strong fort of Badanbury, near Dorchester.

This good news filled every one with

pleasure, and was a sort of cordial of as much value as a strong military force. Lady Bolebec wrote a concise account of the recent occurrences, and besought the commands of Sir Hugh respecting the prisoner in custody ; and having presented the messenger with a suitable reward for being the bearer of such welcome tidings, directed him to return by a route, in which he would avoid the danger of interruption from Montfort's adherents.

With equal policy and satisfaction, the Lady Bolebec resolved to mark the present as a day of victory and rejoicing. She caused flags to be displayed on the turrets of the Tower, dressed her attendants in their richest liveries, and provided a plentiful entertainment, not only for those who kept watch and ward within, but for the purpose of making a generous distribution to the poor and needy without ; thus infusing into all her dependants a portion of ardour, resolution ; and zeal, highly advantageous, at so critical a moment.

The

The day was drawing towards a close, when the sentinel gave notice from the turrets of the approach of a troop of horsemen, in martial order. They were well mounted, and clothed in crimson doublets. Scarcely had the alarm been given, when a company of bowmen, in green vests, also appeared, but halted at a considerable distance, and seemingly retreated behind a thick grove of chesnut trees, on the western side of the Tower.

Some of the servants belonging to the mansion, and about twenty of the foresters, with slings in their hands, were posted on the great tower, while the porter standing at the gate, completely armed, held in his hand the chain of the portcullis half drawn up. The commander advanced, and the trumpets sounded. The porter demanded who it was that approached. He was answered, " Sir Michael Fettiplace brings succours for the defence of Glandon Tower, and desires admittance."

The porter called aloud, " By what sign?"

“ In the name of Alfred Earl of St. Clair,” replied the officer, “ who greets by me the Lady Bolebec.”

At these words, the Lady Bolebec herself came forth upon the battlements, clad in a rich robe of green and silver, having on her head a sable plume, and bearing a shield and lance. Sir Michael Fettiplace immediately dismounted, and, with great courtesy, entreated permission to enter the gates, having, he said, brought forces from Bristol for defence of her Ladyship and the mansion.

“ Sir Michael,” said the Lady, “ we take your visit kindly as you mean it ; but Glandon Tower wants no succours from Montfort’s servants, while the daughter of St. Clair and humble wife of Bolebec can hold a spear and shield. The night draws on—you may have far to go to find repose. We have no time for parley ; wherefore, Sir Knight, farewell.”

With these words, and without waiting for any reply, the Lady Bolebec immediately

ately retired, the drums and trumpets of the garrison sounding a point of war.

Sir Michael Fettiplace, equally surprised and mortified at the failure of his stratagem, made a precipitate retreat, by the road leading towards the north.

The night was dark and tempestuous, and the scheme which had been practised, (notwithstanding its want of success), in different degrees interrupted the repose of every one in Glandon Tower.

The Lady Bolebec's apartments were situated in the south-west angle of the building, and had a private communication with the gallery of the chapel, by means of a winding staircase, which was secured by a strong door studded with iron, and kept constantly locked, unless when the Lady Bolebec was attending her devotions in the chapel.

During almost the whole of this night, without the smallest degree of preconceived apprehension, or the slightest reason for directing her attention to this part of the
E 3 building,

building, rather than to any other, her Ladyship was incessantly disturbed by ideas of insecurity and danger, which were not the less distressing because she could not account for them. Sometimes she fancied that she heard the sound of footsteps on the staircase; at another time, that the hinges of the door creaked, as if attempted to be forcibly opened; then that the stones in the wall were crushed, as if by some powerful engine; and presently that the loosened bars which guarded the loopholes by which the passage was lighted, were giving way. Notwithstanding the natural fortitude of an heroic mind, Lady Bolebec felt it impossible to conquer these unaccountable emotions of terror. They continued during the night, and were scarcely removed by the cheerfulness of morning.

In consequence of these sensations, Lady Bolebec caused every part of the Tower to be carefully searched, more particularly in that **quarter** whence the noises had seemed to proceed; but nothing was discovered
to

to justify her alarm, or remove the apprehensions which, in spite of all the reasoning she could apply to the subject, still clung to her mind.

In order to ascertain whether there were any parties of Sir Michael Fettiplace's men lurking in the vicinage, Stephen, disguised as a peasant, and accompanied by one of the foresters, was sent towards the hermitage, to explore that part of the Forest. They were ordered not to venture into the cavern at the cottage, it being thought more prudent to await the arrival of the Earl of St. Clair with his forces, before a search was made there; but to mark attentively whether there were any appearances of the spot having been of late much resorted to.

In the meantime, the Lady Belebec descended to the dungeon in which the prisoner was confined, with an intention, if possible, to obtain some farther account of the designs of the enemy.

The room where the prisoner was shut

up was a large apartment, in which, contrary to the usual practice of those times, both light and air were admitted. The apertures were, however, well secured by iron bars, and the door also was of iron.

The generous sentiments by which the family of Bolebec were always actuated, extended to the captive in the dungeon; and he had experienced so much more compassion and kindness than he at first expected, as to have produced a very different frame of mind from that with which he had entered his prison: but nothing could subdue his native obstinacy, nor soften the malignity of his temper.

At the entrance of Lady Bolebec, who was accompanied by her women, and attended by several domestics well armed, he arose, with a sort of sullen respect. She addressed him with a frankness of manner, which almost always conciliates, by affording the best pledge of sincerity; and told him, that the plot in which he had been engaged, for seizing Glandon Tower, at a period
when

when its Lord had taken arms in defence of his lawful sovereign, was an offence of so heinous a nature, that there could be no other chance of saving his life, but by the interference of those against whom personally the destructiveness of that plot had been designed: that she was well aware of the rooted animosity borne to her house by the Earl of Leicester, but that, on the present occasion, she was disposed to consider the scheme which had been laid for the destruction of herself and family in the light of an offence against the legitimate sovereignty of the monarch, rather than an act of private treachery, or domestic hostility: that she would therefore deal by the prisoner with the strictest justice, leaving him to the judgment of Prince Edward, who was then the administrator of the affairs of the kingdom: but that if he the prisoner expected or desired mercy, a full and explicit disclosure of all he knew of the conspiracy, could alone entitle him to her application in his behalf; and that if he could bring

himself to make such a disclosure, with sincerity, and without delay, he might rely on her influence being used to obtain his pardon and release, both from captivity and the anathema of the church.

The prisoner, who seemed to be much affected by the generosity and frankness of this address, replied, that however grateful he might feel for any effort on the part of Lady Bolebec to procure his liberation, he should think himself but ill entitled to it by treachery; that whatsoever might be his future fate, he would make no farther disclosure than he had already done; and therefore entreated that he might not be pressed on that head.

There was something in his air and manner which bespoke a person of high condition; a lofty and supercilious brow marked a certain haughtiness of disposition, which shewed that he was more accustomed to command than to obey; and from the first moment that Lady Bolebec cast her eyes upon him, she felt a strong conviction that
he

he was no ordinary prisoner. Finding, however, that no impression could be made on his inflexible temper, her Ladyship told him, that unless he would inform her of his real name and rank, she would cause him to be marched a prisoner to the Prince's army, where military execution would be his undoubted fate. The pretended friar boldly replied—"With my name and rank, Madam, you will perhaps be too well acquainted, long before the time in which it would be possible for me to reach the Prince's army."

Lady Bolebec was now convinced that the danger to be dreaded was near at hand. The determined emphasis with which the prisoner had spoken at once aroused her astonishment and apprehensions. The paper of instructions, which had been found upon him, mentioned indeed that there were spies employed to watch the motions of those who inhabited Glandon Tower, in order, if possible, to gain admission by stealth; and that, if this could be effected,

the prisoner would receive notice of it together with instructions how to proceed. It also intimated, that the garrison at Warkworth would be ready to march at an hour's warning, in case their assistance were required; but that, as it was well known that there were but few persons at Glandon, it was expected that the force already at his disposal would be sufficient to effect the intended object, without farther aid, if the key of either of the gates could once be obtained.

The prisoner had been directed to fathom the moat, and measure the walls, that it might be judged whether it were practicable to pass the one, and scale the other; and he was ordered, in case of any accident befalling him, to take care that one of his associates should give immediate intelligence to Fitz-Parnell, the governor of Warkworth Castle. There was much ambiguity in what followed; but it was not difficult to make out that the enemy thought himself sure of possessing the Tower, if
either

either of his spies could once get within the walls. Some contrivance was hinted at for draining the moat, and undermining the walls; but farther instructions on this head were promised, when he should have made a report of their condition.

Stephen and his companion traversed the Forest in every direction for several miles, but could see nothing indicative of the presence of an enemy. The approach to the cottage was indeed much more worn than formerly, and there were the marks of footsteps, as if horses had passed through various parts of the wood by which it was surrounded; but the cottage itself remained in the same desolate condition as usual; and on entering it, there was nothing to excite alarm.

Stephen, notwithstanding his instructions, had so strong an inclination to examine the subterraneous passage, that he proposed to his companion to descend into it. The proposal was readily assented to, for there seemed to be no possible grounds
for

for fear, while curiosity offered its strongest encouragement.

The descent was perfectly dark, and the travellers proceeded with great caution, listening at every step, and each exploring his way with a long staff, which they had cut for that purpose in the neighbouring wood. After proceeding in this manner for some time, a sort of rumbling noise was heard at some distance, but not immediately in the direction towards which the passage they were in seemed to lead. They listened attentively. The sound seemed like that which might be occasioned by a heavy body rolling down a deep descent; but in a moment every thing was again still.

They resolved to pursue their journey, and, if possible, to discover the termination of the cavern. On a sudden a gleam of light broke on them, from a narrow opening, on the left hand; but the passage seemed to take an opposite direction. They moved slowly towards the aperture
whence

whence the light issued, and found a long flight of irregular steps, which brought them up through the hollow trunk of a large tree, on the spot where the two horsemen had disappeared from the sight of Norman, when he had watched the friar to the cottage, and which proved to be the identical elm under the spreading branches of which the cavaliers had left their horses. It was now evident that they had descended by this passage to meet the monk; and it was probable that when Stephen followed him from the hermitage towards the cottage, and as suddenly lost sight of him as Norman had done of the horsemen, he also had eluded his pursuer by the same route. The internal aperture of the elm-tree was high up among the branches, and so much hidden by the warty excrescences of the trunk, that it had escaped either suspicion or observation.

Having thus explored the passage from the cottage to the elm, without any interruption, they determined not to give over

over their search until they had seen the whole interior of the cavern; and accordingly returned through the hollow of the tree, and descended by the broken and irregular steps into the passage before-mentioned. When they came to the spot at which they had first seen the light, their ears were again assailed by a noise, very different from that which they had before heard, and resembling the jarring of a strong door shut with sudden violence; but no voice was heard, and they were shrouded in midnight darkness.

Proceeding onwards, the passage became narrower, and Stephen, who was foremost, struck his staff on a plank or board, which, before he could recover himself, gave way, and immediately precipitated him into a vault.

From the roof was suspended a lamp, which afforded just sufficient light for him to perceive the figure of a man, (apparently as much astonished as he was himself), who immediately fell on his knees before
Stephen,

Stephen, and entreated him to do him no harm ; for “ indeed, Sir,” said he, “ I should never have thought of coming here, if it had not been for the accident.”

Stephen by this time perceived that it was one of the cottagers that lived near Glandon Tower who thus addressed him ; and, taking him by the hand, replied, “ What, Simon ! art thou here ? and is this the way that you receive an old acquaintance ? ”

The fright into which the poor man had been already thrown rendered him incapable of making an immediate reply. He remembered the voice of the person who spoke to him ; but could scarcely conceive it possible to have met with Stephen by an accident so very extraordinary. The truth is, that Simon being employed in digging gravel out of a pit in the neighbourhood, had on a sudden made an opening into a cavity, whence he fell, or rather rolled down upon the trap-door before-mentioned ; and this was the accident which occasioned

sioned the noise that had been heard by Stephen and the forester, on their first coming into the passage. The subsequent sound had been occasioned by an ineffectual attempt which the cottager had made to ascend by the same passage, when the door, which turned upon a pivot in the centre, being very heavy, shut of its own accord, and detained him a prisoner till the arrival of Stephen.

This was the relation which Simon made, as soon as he had recovered sufficient presence of mind to reply to the question of his unexpected visitor. In the interim, the man who had accompanied Stephen having in a moment missed his companion, stood motionless with fear and astonishment, equally unwilling to proceed or retreat. At length, the welcome voice of his fellow-traveller holloing to him, and desiring that he would not be afraid to come forward, encouraged him to go on; when, stepping on the plank, he was in turn let safely down into the cavern below.

The

The three adventurers were now at leisure to examine the contents of this dismal cavern, which was a capacious vault, cut out of a stratum of sand-stone. Everywhere around them appeared weapons and instruments of destruction, together with scaling-ladders, mattocks, and mining tools. There was also a quantity of provisions; but, after the strictest search, they were unable to discover that it had a communication with any other apartment.

Stephen attempted, but in vain, to detach the lamp from its connexion with the roof, in order to facilitate their retreat through the passage, by the light which it would afford. However, one of his companions found among the stores a number of torches, which being still better adapted to the same purpose, each man taking a light in one hand, and a battle-axe in the other, now thought himself more than a match for any number of enemies that he might have to encounter on his return; and having placed a ladder under the trap-door,

door, Stephen first, and after him his two comrades, ascended without much difficulty into the passage, and, making the best of their way towards the cottage, again ascended into the cheering light of day.

Here extinguishing the torches, it was resolved that one of them should remain in the wood, near the spot, watching the approach of an enemy, while the others proceeded to Glandon Tower, to inform the Lady Bolebec of their discovery.

On receiving this extraordinary intelligence, Lady Bolebec summoned the neighbouring inhabitants of the Forest by the sound of the alarm bell; and having imparted to them the urgency of the case, required their immediate assistance in the removal of the stores, promising, in return for their services, a bow and quiver to every person among them capable of using them.

Stephen was again dispatched with as many men as could be spared from the
Tower ;

Tower; and, accompanied by a posse of cottagers, both male and female, soon arrived at the entrance of the cavern. No person had been seen to approach the spot during the absence of Stephen at the Tower; the company therefore proceeded without apprehension, leaving, however, a party to guard the approaches both from the tree and the cottage; and while Stephen and a few of the most active of his followers descended into the inferior cavern, the remainder distributed themselves along the passage, in such a manner as to be enabled to remove the weapons and mining tools with the utmost expedition. Such was the ardour and attachment of the honest peasantry to the family of Bolebec, that making their cause their own, even the very children vied with their parents in endeavouring to render themselves useful on this occasion, and eagerly carried the lighted torches, which were handed up to them out of the cavern, to guide the steps
of

of those who were laden with the warlike stores.

Having accomplished the removal of the principal part of the contents of the repository, particularly the scaling-ladders and mining implements, and safely delivered them at the gates of Glandon Tower, the Lady Bolebec presented to every one who chose it a bow and quiver of arrows; and Stephen divided among them the whole stock of provisions which had thus fallen into his hands.

Before they finally quitted the cavern, it was thought prudent to extinguish the lamp, which seemed to have been contrived in such a manner as to be capable of burning for a long period of time, without requiring a fresh supply of oil. The aperture in the elm-tree was also effectually enclosed, and an attempt made to block up the passage, by throwing large quantities of sand down the opening through which the cottager had fallen from the pit into the cavern.

These

These things being done, Stephen and his associates returned in high spirits to Glandon Tower.

The Lady Bolebec retired to her chamber earlier this evening than it was her usual custom. She had formed the resolution, without imparting to any one her design, of keeping watch all night, to discover, if she could, the occasion of the noise by which she had been so much disturbed during the preceding evening.

For this purpose, at the approach of midnight, about the same time when she had first heard the noise before mentioned, she passed softly down the staircase leading to the chapel, and stationed herself close to the door whence the noise had seemed to proceed. She had not remained there long when the repercussion of some iron instrument against the stones under her feet was distinctly heard; she could even perceive the steps shaken by the force employed, and heard large quantities of loosened

ened stones falling down. She immediately returned to her chamber, and taking with her a light, and the key of the gallery in which were the apartments of the principal domestics, descended the great staircase, and knocked at the door of the room occupied by the faithful Stephen. At the sound of his Lady's voice, Stephen instantly arose; and Lady Bolebec desired him to call some of the servants, and meet her at the door of the chapel; in the meantime intending to apprize the guard of the occasion of her alarm, that there might be more assistance at hand in case of emergency. For this purpose, she crossed the great court of the Tower, with the taper in her hand, when, to her unspeakable surprise, she found the sentinel, who had been placed at the entrance of the passage leading to the dungeon in which the prisoner was confined, struggling on the ground with a man in armour. She immediately called out loudly for the guard, and her attendants hastened to the spot, where they

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had

had scarcely extricated the sentinel from the person with whom he was fighting, and who had severely wounded him with a dagger in many places, before several other persons, rushing hastily out of the passage, fell upon them with great violence. The conflict now became general. The assailants had either swords or daggers; the guards of Lady Bolebec their gisarmes and battle-axes, with which they soon hewed down their antagonists, even in the very entrance by which they had broken in, and thus prevented the admission of others. The night was so extremely dark, and the number of assailants being unknown, a quantity of fascines, which lay in the court, were thrust into the door-way, and many large stones piled up against them, in order to secure the garrison from a renewal of the assault; and the soldiers remained drawn up in martial array during the remainder of the night.

The Lady Bolebec, who with heroic for-

titude had stood by, exhorting and encouraging the soldiers to the performance of their duty, and a manly and vigorous defence, now ascended the turret at that angle of the building nearest the spot where the breach had been made; but the pitchy darkness of the night rendered it impossible to discern any traces of the enemy. She therefore again retired to her own apartment, and anxiously awaited for the return of daylight.

CHAP. V.

Six prisoners had been taken in the conflict, all of them wounded, excepting the man in armour, who proved to be Sir Michael Fettiplace himself. This commander had been so much chagrined at the disappointment he experienced, on attempting to seize the Tower by stratagem, that he had resolved on taking the lead, in any attack which might be made upon it.

The prisoners were all consigned to the dungeon under the guard-room; and as there could be no doubt of the pretended monk having planned, if not assisted in the admission of the enemy, it was resolved

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that

that no mistaken notions of lenity should prevent the assailants from being properly secured. The treatment which the poor forester also had met with, who was tied to the tree in the wood, and left to perish, by direction of Sir Michael Fettiplace, was still fresh in the memory of Stephen, and he made it his particular request to the Lady Bolebec that the Knight might be committed to his custody; which being granted, he caused him to be put in fetters, and assigned him no better accommodations than were allowed to the common prisoners, taking care to inform him, at the same time, of the reason for such unusual severity.

When the morning appeared, the gallant defenders of Glandon Tower, who had never quitted the spot on which their valour had been so successfully exerted, removed the fascines with which they had barricaded the passage where the assault was made; and, inclusive of seven who had fallen within the court, numbered fifteen of the
enemy

enemy slain by their battle-axes, although not one of their own body was materially wounded, excepting the sentinel who was first attacked by Sir Michael Fettiplace.

On removing the dead bodies, and entering the dungeon, the iron door of which had been forced open, there was found a large stone removed out of the floor, and a passage made under the cloisters, through the foundations of the turret at the western angle, into the cemetery, and opening into the moat, at the very surface of the water, exactly under the staircase leading to the chapel from Lady Bolebec's apartment.

It was the removal of the stones in this part which had occasioned the first alarm, and thus eventually saved the Tower from the hands of an implacable enemy.

The passage over the moat was effected by a singular contrivance. A lofty tree, which grew near the edge of the moat, had been cut down, and placed across it, as a temporary bridge for the assailants, who had thus entered the passage before described,

scribed, and passing through the cemetery, had there found ample space for the stones and earth necessary to be removed for the completion of their design.

It yet remained a secret by what means the prisoner, to whom the plan and execution of this arduous undertaking was naturally attributed, had concealed the implements with which he had eluded the vigilance of his guards, and violated the boasted security of Glandon Tower; for it was not supposed probable that the enemy from without could have made their approaches to the dungeon in which he was confined. The penetrating mind of Lady Bolebec immediately suggested, that the future safety of the mansion must depend on the means of defence without, rather than on the strength of the walls.

The assault which had been made on the Tower prevented the arms and stores which had been brought out of the cavern in the Forest from being completely housed during the ensuing day; for every hand which
could

could be spared from the domestic avocations requisite to provide for so large an establishment, was employed in procuring or applying the materials necessary for repairing the breach.

While the Lady Bolebec was thus providing for the defence of her family, she did not neglect to employ the usual method adopted in those days, of striking terror into her enemies, by causing the bodies of those who had been slain to be hung on the branches of the trees in the neighbouring grove.

In three days, the wall of the turret was properly secured, and the moat cleared of the trees and stones which had been thrown into it. On the morning of the fourth day, while the garrison were employed in arranging the weapons in the armoury, and stowing away the rest of the plunder which had been brought from the cavern, the Earl of St. Clair, at the head of a gallant company, made his appearance before the great gate of the Tower.

This young nobleman wore the rich scarf which had been sent to him by his sister. He was mounted on a milk-white charger, and his helmet decorated with a plume of white feathers. On his right-hand, on a black horse, richly caparisoned, rode that renowned veteran, Sir Humphrey Bohun, who having left the command of the garrison of Deyizes to the Lord Scales, had, in journeying towards the north, met with the Earl of St. Clair; and hearing from him of the apprehensions which were entertained that an attack would be speedily made upon Glandon Tower, requested to be permitted to join his troop with the forces of the Earl, and to accompany him with all his followers, who were the flower of the army, that had lately acquitted themselves so gallantly in the west.

The Lady Bolebec received them with every demonstration of regard. The Earl with Sir Humphrey and his attendant officers were conducted into the state apartments, and the soldiery commodiously entertained
and

and lodged in the rooms which had been for some time prepared for their reception.

From the day when Sir Hugh de Bolebec quitted his mansion, his amiable consort had never enjoyed a moment so satisfactory and delicious, as that which brought to her assistance a beloved brother, who had always manifested for her the sincerest regard and affection:

As the Earl approached Glandon Tower, the dead bodies suspended on the boughs of the trees proclaimed that a victory had been obtained over the enemy; and when he was informed of the nature of the attack, and the insidious stratagem which had been defeated by the vigilance of his sister, he joined with the brave and valorous Bohun in the warmest congratulations and applause of her heroic and admirable conduct.

Glandon Tower was now garrisoned with a sufficient force to bid defiance to any attack; but as the army of Simon de Montfort had been augmented by an incredible number

of malcontents, and he had begun his march towards the borders of Worcestershire, it was expected that when the proud Earl understood that his friend Sir Michael Fetiplace was detained in prison, he might detach a part of his numerous forces to attempt his rescue.

The experienced Bohun recommended to the Lady Bolebec and St. Clair to cut down all the trees which surrounded the walls of Glandon, particularly on the west and south sides, where the spreading branches of some of the ancient oaks and beech almost overshadowed the walls.

St. Clair having caused Sir Michael Fetiplace to be brought into his presence, severely reprimanded him for his mean and unsoldierlike conduct, in having endeavoured to gain possession of the mansion of so generous a chieftain as Hugh de Bolebec by an insidious stratagem; and on the relation being made by Stephen of the cruelty which had been practised towards the messenger sent by Lady Bolebec with
a letter

a letter to the Earl of St. Clair at Bristol, and who must have perished but for the accident which brought his fellow-servant through the wood, Sir Humphrey Bohun. was so much incensed at what he heard, that he upbraided Fettiplace in the strongest terms, and told him, that if it had been one of his own messengers who had been so cruelly treated, and the offender had afterwards fallen into his hands, he would have caused him to be instantly led to execution, let his rank and condition have been whatsoever it might.

As the truly brave are naturally humane, so those who are distinguished by arrogance and cruelty when in the possession of power, are usually most obsequious and dastardly when under a reverse of circumstances. This axiom was verified in Sir Michael Fettiplace, who, though a soldier from his youth, and had been often in the field of battle, lost, with freedom, all that insolence and *hauteur* which had marked his prosperous fortunes. He fell on his knees before Sir

Humphrey Bohun, and in the most humiliating manner entreated him to intercede in his favour with the Lady Bolebec and her noble brother, towards whom he acknowledged that he had acted most unworthily.

The brave Bohun told him, in reply, that whatever commiseration he might have felt for a brother soldier in adversity, he could not bring his mind into a condition to pity the distress of any man who suffered his arrogance in prosperity to stifle the common feelings of humanity; but when misfortunes fell to his own lot, sunk pusillanimously under their influence.

He was then remanded to his prison; but his fetters were taken off, and he was accommodated with a separate apartment, by the especial order of Lady Bolebec.

A few days before Sir Humphrey Bohun left Devizes, he had received intelligence that Hugh de Bolebec having entirely routed the remains of the army which he had driven from the siege of that town, had determined
to

to effect a junction with the forces in the north, and attempt to cut off the left wing of Montfort's army, which at that time occupied the principal parts of Shropshire, and overawed many of the inhabitants of that district, who, disgusted and oppressed by the insolence of the Barons, were disposed to join in support of the King's cause, but prevented by the power of the Earl of Leicester.

Prince Edward, with the main body of his army, still remained in the south, daily increasing the number of his forces. He was already become a great favourite of the soldiery, and possessed of distinguished personal bravery, united with a suavity of manners peculiarly captivating, was regarded by the whole country as the great instrument of their deliverance, from a state little better than that of the most abject slavery; for however oppressive may be the tyranny of an absolute sovereign, the despotism exercised by a band of usurpers, each intent on the aggrandisement of his
own

own family and connexions, and regardless of the sufferings of those under his authority, far exceeds all that has been hitherto recorded of the oppressions of a single tyrant.

The power of an oligarchy, too, is maintained in constant vigour and activity by frequent changes. The admission of fresh members into it, who have all their resentments to gratify, augments the evils of such a government: while the cruelty of a single tyrant, although even the most ferocious, becomes at length satiated and fatigued.

Thus, the oppressions which the people of England had experienced in the beginning of the reign of Henry, and which had first excited the Barons to take up arms, in opposition to his authority, were slight, in comparison with those which these very men inflicted on the inferior orders, when they in turn had assumed the reins of government, and seized the rod of power.

This consideration should check that restless spirit of innovation, which rashly demands

mands a change in forms of governments, without reflecting on the consequences which experience has proved to be the result of every sudden and hasty transfer of authority.

He who would conduct the branches of his vine into situations which appear to be better adapted for promoting its growth and fruitfulness than those which they have before occupied, bends the young shoots by gentle means, and they are unresistingly modelled according to his wishes; but violent and sudden attempts to force the parent stock, or revert the matured limbs, are always stubbornly opposed, and usually lead to disappointment on the one hand, and destruction on the other. This is a useful lesson, and cannot be too often nor too forcibly inculcated.

At the period above described, every one looked forward with great anxiety to the event of a battle, on which the fate of the whole kingdom seemed to depend, and which now appeared to be inevitable.

The

The experienced Montfort was at the head of a powerful army, well appointed, and eager to try their strength with the enemy.

Prince Edward, whose bosom glowed with martial ardour, was equally desirous of signalizing himself by a display of personal valour, at all times so attractive in the eyes of a warlike people, and anxious to support the throne of his father, the right of his inheritance.

The impetuosity of their respective followers was heightened by innumerable circumstances of private animosity and feudal disputes, which filled the contending parties with a sort of ferocious zeal, not merely to subdue, but to destroy each other.

Public grievances united with personal wrongs to fortify their minds with a contempt of danger and of death, and indisposed them from listening to any terms of reconciliation, and even from regarding the claims of blood or the bonds of friendship. Each eagerly grasped the spear, and
sacrificed

sacrificed every consideration to the gratification of resentment or revenge.

These were the ordinary sentiments of the times, and such were the feelings of Simon de Montfort towards the houses of Bolebec and St. Clair.

It could not long remain unknown to him that his old associate in arms had fallen into the hands of those towards whom he had long borne the most inveterate hatred ; nor was it likely he could patiently endure that Sir Michael Fettiplace should remain the prisoner of a woman, and in the custody of the boy St. Clair.

The failure of the plan which had been laid for obtaining possession of Glandon Tower, was no sooner communicated, by those who had escaped, to the Governor of Warkworth, than he dispatched a messenger to his uncle, the Earl of Leicester, for his instructions, not thinking it prudent to hazard a direct attack upon that fortress with the forces which he could then spare from the garrison under his command, especially
as,

as, from the intelligence he had received, there was good ground for suspecting that, by the time he could arrive there, the Earl of St. Clair would have brought up his auxiliaries from Bristol, and thus increased the difficulty of the undertaking. However, he was unwilling that Sir Michael Fettiplace should remain a prisoner, and therefore lost no time in communicating to Montfort the intelligence of his captivity.

In the interim, the Lady Bolebec, assisted by the counsel of Bohun and her brother, caused every preparation to be made for a vigorous defence.

Stephen, to whom the immediate custody of the prisoners was particularly entrusted, had so much ingratiated himself with two of the most intelligent among them, as to obtain from them some account of the plan of the enemy.

One of these men had been employed in the conveyance of the arms to the Forest, which he described to have been effected
by

by the garrison of Warkworth, in the disguise of pilgrims, who, in small detached parties, penetrated by night through the Forest by different routes, and delivered the implements and weapons which they had brought to a chosen band, under the immediate direction of John Fitz-Parnell, brother of the Governor of Warkworth Castle, who, with a band of chosen men, had designed to scale the walls of the Tower, on the very day when his retreat in the Forest was discovered by Norman.

Fitz-Parnell having observed that he was watched, and fearing lest the forester whom he had seen near the cottage might discover the passage into the cavern, had concealed the mouth of it, in the manner before described.

On the arrival of the two horsemen, who were officers belonging to Montfort's army, he communicated to them his suspicions, and desired that the execution of the project he had planned might be delayed for a few days, until he should have been able
to

to ascertain whether the Lady Bolebec had adopted any new precautions, in consequence of the report which the forester had undoubtedly made of what he had seen; not supposing, however, even if the passage to the cavern were discovered, that any one could be found daring enough to venture to explore it, unless supported by a stronger force than that which he knew to be remaining in Glandon Tower.

The time for the intended attack was therefore to depend upon the intelligence which he promised to send to Warkworth, in four or five days. At this period, Montfort being desirous of strengthening his forces by the addition of all the men who could be spared from Sir Walter Fitz-Parnell's garrison, the company which had been stationed in the Forest were required to return to Warkworth, to supply the place of those who had been called from that fortress by the command of Leicester, John Fitz-Parnell remaining at the cavern, attended only by two soldiers, who were to be

be employed alternately as messengers or spies.

Clad in the habit of a monk, which had been forcibly taken from one of the Grey Friars, for the purpose of a disguise the least likely to excite curiosity, and the best calculated for avoiding obtrusive inquiries or examination, Fitz-Parnell continued his daily visits to the Tower; and falling into the hands of the monks of Studley, in the manner before related, his attendants, who watched and observed the transaction, unseen by any one at the Tower, conveyed intelligence of it immediately to the Governor of Warkworth, who instantly began his operations for obtaining possession of Glandon by stratagem, lest a more direct and formidable attack should endanger the life of his brother.

Fitz-Parnell had submitted to the ignominy of personal chastisement by the scourges of the monks, and all the subsequent horrors of a dungeon, without disclosing a single word respecting his condition

dition or character ; but his mind brooded on revenge. Naturally fertile in contriving expedients, and endowed with an uncommon share of perseverance, he had contributed to effect the admission of his associates, by the original suggestion of the plan by which they ultimately succeeded in forcing an entrance into the Tower, and at the same time restored him to liberty.

The expedient for passing the moat had been previously planned by himself, and an opening actually attempted from without into the cemetery, which one of his attendants remembered to have seen at the interment of Sir Anthony de Bolebec, father of the present possessor of Glandon Tower. The description given by this man, aided by the remarks which Fitz-Parnell had been able to make in person, from the opportunities of examining the site of the building in his daily and nightly visits, formed the groundwork of the plan.

It was Fitz-Parnell's design, after obtaining

ing possession of this fortress, to send the Lady Bolebec and all her domestics prisoners to Montfort's army, who expected thus to be able to detach Sir Hugh de Bolebec from the royal cause, or at least to prevent his active co-operation with Prince Edward's forces.

Although Fitz-Parnell was unable to assist his friends in forcing an entrance into the Tower, he contrived to give them a signal of the part in which he was confined; for they had no sooner penetrated into the cemetery, than, by striking with a stone against the wall of the dungeon, on that side on which he heard the sound of their mining instruments, he gave them notice where he might be found, and of course, whither they should direct their exertions.

The thickness of the wall between the cemetery and the dungeon was, however, so immense, that the assailants found all attempts to break through it ineffectual. The cement had, by length of time, become even harder than the stones them-

selves; and they were so firmly consolidated, as to have become a sort of adamantine barrier. The only method by which this obstacle could be surmounted, was by taking up the marble pavement of the cemetery, and undermining the foundation of the wall, which at length, with incredible labour, they accomplished, the cemetery itself affording abundant space for the rubbish and earth which they were obliged to remove.

Sir Michael Fettiplace, as has been before related, headed the assailants, and having at length penetrated into the dungeon where Fitz-Parnell was confined, resolved to force an entrance into the court, and attempt to gain possession of one of the turrets, where it was thought they had sufficient strength to maintain a position against the united attack of the garrison, until fresh succours could arrive, and complete the conquest of Glandon Tower.

They did succeed in forcing the iron door which led to the area; but Sir Michael
Fettiplace

Fettiplace being instantly attacked by the sentinel, and the rest of the guard coming up immediately, this daring scheme terminated in the defeat of the enterprize, and the destruction of the greater number of those who had engaged in it.

Fitz-Parnell, however, effected his escape in safety; and thus Montfort regained his favourite nephew, at the expence of losing a powerful friend, in the capture of Fettiplace.

In order to guard against a sudden attack, either from the forces of Leicester or Sir Walter Fitz-Parnell, the Earl of St. Clair ordered a number of his troopers to scour the country, and be constantly on the alert, that the earliest notice might be given of the approach of an enemy. Many days, however, elapsed, without any intelligence being received respecting either the one or the other.

St. Clair, whose youthful ardour ill brooked the tediousness of waiting so long in uncertain expectation, was extremely

desirous of endeavouring to reconnoitre the enemy ; and it was at length agreed upon, that Sir Humphrey Bohun should remain with Lady Bolebec at the Tower, whilst St. Clair, with about twenty of his followers, well armed, should cross the country towards Warkworth, and satisfy himself respecting the condition and strength of Fitz-Parnell's forces.

In these times, a chieftain seldom travelled far from home, without a great train of attendants ; and whether he were going into battle, or to pay a visit, was alike followed by a multitude of vassals.

As Studley Priory was near the road by which St. Clair intended to travel, he determined on paying his personal respects to the worthy fathers, who had lately so kindly exerted themselves to oblige his sister. A courier was therefore sent forward, to notify the approach of the Earl, who arrived early in the afternoon, and was received with all the respect due to his rank and character.

This

This was perhaps the sublimest period of aristocracy. The nobles everywhere maintained their superiority of condition, by a suitable display of state and magnificence; the forms of respect were never dispensed with, the pride of ancestry never forgotten; and the awful restraints which were instituted as the fences and guards of power, were never even for a moment laid aside.

In the progressive changes of society, the energies of the mind acquired a new and superior influence, and in time began to check and controul the arrogance of the wealthy, and the hitherto unbridled will of the great. Deference was not everywhere paid to the opinions of those who possessed vast territorial property; and the generous spirit of liberty animated the patriot's mind to break the fetters of tame obedience, and unlimited submission.

Reciprocal rights began to be understood; and the wealthy and the powerful at length discovered, that something more was neces-

sary than those adventitious advantages, to preserve the respect of the world, or secure their own possessions. By degrees they associated more generally, and with less and less restraint, with those who surrounded them, until little more of their ancient distinctions remained, besides the superior splendour of their habitations, and their titular honours.

But while we rejoice that reason and philosophy have thus triumphed over Vandalic barbarism, that the glorious spirit of British freedom has thus triumphed over tyranny and despotism, let us not forget that there is a point, beyond which the exercise of that spirit, instead of increasing the happiness of society, is destructive of all its comforts; that even in the particular point to which we now refer, the love of novelty, and the desire of change, may go too far: for if modern times have gained, in many respects, by the amalgamation of different ranks, and the destruction of those ancient barriers of distinction of which the outlines
have

have been just described, they have, on the other hand, lost no inconsiderable portion of that zealous attachment and that respectful imitation which merit and virtue (however they *may universally deserve them*) never *do* command, unless when displayed among the higher classes of society.

The same philosophy, therefore, which teaches us to despise the ideal distinctions of mere possession, when unaccompanied by superior worth or superior virtue, should teach us to guard against the false and hypothetical doctrines which would inculcate the advantages of a total abolition of those lines and barriers which experience has taught us are absolutely necessary for the preservation of the common interest of the whole community.

The Earl of St. Clair was conducted by the Prior of Studley into the magnificent refectory of that ancient edifice. The hospitable board was spread with the choicest dainties, (for in those days the monks had abundant opportunities of choosing among

the luxuries of life, and, as Johnson observed, as they had a choice, who can blame them for having chosen well?); and while the Earl was sumptuously entertained by the superiors, his brave followers were plentifully regaled by the lay-brethren and servitors.

St. Clair informed the prior of the daring attack which had been made upon Glandon Tower, of which he had not before heard; for although the sanctity of his order was esteemed an effectual security against personal violence from either of the contending parties, it was deemed incumbent upon the clergy to maintain a decorous neutrality; and to prevent any irregularities which might happen from promiscuous intercourse with the people, it was usual, in times of public disturbance, to confine themselves within the walls of their respective monasteries, unless when called upon to exercise their ecclesiastical functions. Thus secluded from the world and its cares, they lived in harmony and peace, free from
those

those conflicting passions which divided the rest of their fellow-subjects in that barbarous and hostile age.

When St. Clair mentioned that the person on whom the prior's servants had inflicted manual chastisement was no other person than the nephew of Montfort, the most powerful nobleman in the kingdom, and at this very moment contending for the supreme authority, the venerable old ecclesiastic, so far from expressing any regret at what had been done, emphatically told the Earl, that not doubting the atrocities of Fitz-Parnell were countenanced by his uncle, he wished that it had been Leicester himself who had fallen into the hands of his monks, that they might have taught him, that he to whom is committed the discipline of the church is no respecter of persons.

The repast being over, the Earl of St. Clair returned thanks to the prior for his hospitality, and leaving Studley, immedi-

ately took horse, and, with his attendants, galloped off towards Warkworth.

At the approach of evening, as they passed through a small village, they fell in with a party of Sir Walter Fitz-Parnell's soldiers, who were endeavouring to procure forage for their horses. St. Clair directed one of his servants to enter into conversation with them, while the rest rode slowly on. The soldiers, who seemed very communicative, readily informed him that the Governor of Warkworth had suddenly left the garrison, the day before, in company with his brother and a few attendants, and that it was conjectured they were gone to meet the Earl of Leicester's army; that the forces at Warkworth were under orders to hold themselves in readiness to march at an hour's warning; but that they had no certainty of the road they were to pursue, unless they were destined to join the main body of the army near Worcester.

The

The trooper having parted from his companions, not without informing them, however, that the party which they had just seen belonged to the Earl of Leicester, and were proceeding towards Warwick, to be stationed in the castle there, hastened to rejoin the Earl of St. Clair, and to communicate the intelligence he had obtained.

A thought now suggested itself to St. Clair, which he immediately communicated to his principal attendants:—it was, to endeavour to seize part of the garrison of Warkworth by stratagem, as a reprisal for the attack which they had made upon Glendon Tower.

The critical period at which they had made this excursion, the time of night, and, above all, the ardour of his followers, on hearing the intention of the Earl, confirmed his resolution to carry it into immediate effect.

Procuring, therefore, at the nearest hamlet, the necessary materials, St. Clair

caused a short order to be fairly written, in the following terms:

*TO THE GOVERNOR OF WARKWORTH CASTLE,
OR HIS DEPUTY.*

“LET an officer, with twenty men, well mounted, immediately repair with the utmost possible speed, to Cherterton, where they will be met by a party of Sir John Penruddock’s horse, attended by a proper guide to conduct them to the place of their destination.

“Hereof fail you not.

“From the head-quarters of the Earl of Leicester’s army, by command of the said Earl,

HENRY FETTIPLACE.

“At the meeting of the troops, the word shall be, ‘Montfort and Victory.’”

On

On inquiring among his attendants who would undertake to deliver this order at Warkworth Castle, the Earl was answered by them all so unanimously, that it was difficult for him to fix upon a messenger. He chose, however, one of the old soldiers, who was acquainted with the roads leading to Warkworth, and entrusting him with the order, commanded him to deliver it as soon as possible, and to return immediately.

They were now at the distance of about three miles from the Castle; but the moon shone bright, and the roads were good. St. Clair caused his men to alight from their horses, and permit them to graze in a neighbouring field.

Thus the rights of private property are violated equally by friends and foes, when a country unfortunately becomes the seat of war, be the cause of that war whatsoever it may.

Having allowed, as he thought, sufficient time for the messenger to accomplish his errand, St. Clair ordered his men to re-

mount their horses. The order was instantly obeyed, and soon afterwards the trooper returned.

On his arrival at Warkworth Castle, he knocked boldly at the gate, and demanded admittance to the governor, to deliver a letter which he stated to have brought from the Earl of Leicester.

The gates being locked, he was refused admittance; but the governor, being informed of his arrival; sent an officer to receive the letter. The messenger, however; stating that he had received positive orders to deliver the letter to no one but the governor himself, was, after a long parley, admitted through the wicket, and brought into the presence of the commanding officer, to whom he delivered the order.

The governor having read the contents, demanded if he had any other message or directions? The trooper told him that he was commanded to return to head-quarters with all speed, carrying with him an acknowledgment of the delivery of the letter; which

which the governor immediately gave him very courteously; and having ordered him to take refreshment, desired that he would commend him to the Earl of Leicester, and return to the army without delay.

St. Clair rewarded the soldier with a piece of gold, and immediately set forward with his gallant companions towards Chesterton, there to await the arrival of the detachment from Warkworth.

The soldiers were directed to pay the strictest attention to the commands which would be issued on the junction of the two troops, and to remember, that in case of resistance, the life of every man should be the penalty of the escape of his prisoner; but in like manner, as punishment was to follow disobedience or neglect, rewards were promised to obedience and alacrity.

The Earl of St. Clair and his followers reached Chesterton at break of day, and stationed themselves in a farm-yard, at the entrance of the village. Lest the appearance of the man who had carried the letter
to

to the Governor of Warkworth might excite suspicion, St. Clair sent him forward to Glandon Tower, to apprize the Lady Bolebec and Sir Humphrey Bohun of the scheme which he had planned, and soliciting their co-operation and assistance in seducing the enemy within the walls of the Tower.

They had not waited long at Chesterton, before the sound of horses on the road announced the approach of the party from Warkworth. The Earl ordered his men to remain in perfect silence, while he himself rode forward to meet the troop. Halting at the distance of a few yards, he demanded the signal, and was answered, "Montfort and victory." Then saluting the officer, he announced, that the directions he had received were to proceed immediately to Bernwood Forest, whither Sir Walter Fitz-Parnell had been already sent by the Earl of Leicester, to attempt the deliverance of Sir Michael Fettiplace out of Glandon Tower.

The officer professed himself ready to accompany

accompany him; and inquiring for the guide promised in the order which had been sent to Warkworth, was immediately answered by one of St. Clair's men, that he was appointed for that purpose.

St. Clair remarked, that his party having been in waiting at the appointed place of meeting longer than he had expected, it would be desirable to proceed with as much expedition as possible.

The two officers, at the head of their respective parties, each drawn up in a single rank, led the way. The whole body proceeded towards the Forest. Silence was strictly commanded; and notwithstanding St. Clair's men and horses began to be greatly fatigued, it was determined not to halt until they arrived in the vicinity of Glandon, at the pretended rendezvous of Sir Walter Fitz-Parnell.

When they had reached the Forest, St. Clair affected to express his disappointment at not meeting with their auxiliaries. They, however, proceeded towards the Tower.

At the distance of about half a mile from the gate, a bowman came running towards them in great haste, shouting, "Victory! victory!—Fitz-Parnell has forced the gates, and commands you to hasten to the Tower."

The officer belonging to the Warkworth men, not having any suspicion of the deceit which had been practised, immediately clapped spurs to his horse, and, encouraging his followers, seemed eager almost to contend with St. Clair who should first arrive to the assistance of his general.

St. Clair, with apparent reluctance, but at the same time pleading the fatigue of his horses, permitted the officer to lead the way, and followed close at his heels with his gallant troop.

Arrived at Glandon Tower, the gates were standing wide open, a company of bowmen were seen drawn up on each side of the road, and Sir Humphrey Bohun, with a body of cuirassiers, within the gateway, in the area of the principal court.

The

The officer, not doubting that the bowmen he saw were part of Montfort's men, expecting every moment to meet Sir Walter Fitz-Parnell and his companions, and animated by the din of arms which resounded from every part of the fortress, rushed impetuously forward through the gateway, followed by St. Clair and his men pell-mell.

Scarcely had he entered the court, when the cuirassiers within surrounded his little troop, and he found himself dismounted, disarmed, and the whole body made prisoners by the garrison.

The consternation occasioned by an event so sudden and unexpected, deprived them of the power of resistance, which, from the numbers and arrangement of the enemy, would have been indeed ineffectual, even if it had been attempted; for the brave Bohun had no sooner heard of the plan which had been formed by his friend St. Clair, than he caused the whole garrison to be duly prepared for affording the Earl every

every assistance requisite for insuring success to so gallant an undertaking.

Thus was a fit reprisal made for the assault which had been conducted under Sir Michael Fettiplace, and happily without spilling a single drop of blood.

St. Clair was even himself surprised at the alacrity with which Bohun's soldiers fulfilled the orders of their experienced leader, the Earl having scarcely had time to dismount, before the enemy had been completely secured.

He approached the officer, now become his prisoner, and, taking him by the hand, requested his pardon for the stratagem by which he had been trepanned into captivity. The officer, whose name was Devereux, was a young gentleman, of interesting manners and pleasing address. Chagrined at being so unexpectedly deprived of liberty, his astonishment had scarcely yet sufficiently subsided, to make room for any other impression. He returned the salutation of the Earl with respect, but accompanied with

with a kind of distrustful coldness. His youthful heart, which just before beat high with martial ardour, now palpitated, in dreadful expectation of the horrors of a dungeon, and the melancholy anticipation of the severities which he well knew were usually practised towards prisoners, in that barbarous age, by their unfeeling and relentless conquerors.

St. Clair, who instantly perceived the emotions of the young soldier, assured him that he had nothing to fear; and, after presenting him to the venerable Bohun, desired him to accompany them into the presence of his sister, the Lady Bolebec.

He was received by her Ladyship with her accustomed affability and condescension. On his name being announced, she exclaimed, "Whom do I see?—surely not the son of the brave Earl of Hereford, in arms against the daughter of his friend St. Clair."

"Madam," replied the graceful youth, his cheek suffused by a crimson blush, of
dis-

disappointment rather than of shame, "such indeed you might have seen me an hour ago; but you now behold me your brother's prisoner."

Bohun, who from his early youth had numbered the Earl of Hereford among his dearest friends, no sooner understood that it was the son of that brave general who stood before him, than he saluted him, with the greatest regard and cordiality.

St. Clair, after conferring in private with Sir Humphrey Bohun for a few moments, invited Devereux to partake of dinner at Lady Bolebec's table; and the repast being over, informed him, that although he had no desire to make him pass another night on horseback, he was at perfect liberty to depart, whither and whensoever he thought proper; that he would not even desire to extort from him a promise not to take up arms against the family of Bolebec, but leave it entirely to his own feelings, whether he would hereafter visit Glandon Tower as a friend or foe.

Young.

Young Devereux, deeply affected by this noble instance of generosity, was with difficulty restrained from throwing himself at the feet of Lady Bolebec and St. Clair, while the eyes of Bohun glistened with delight, at a scene so congenial with his own generous feelings—"Thou art a brave lad," said the veteran warrior, addressing himself to St. Clair, "a true branch of thy parent-stock. They only deserve to conquer, who, like thee, know how to use success with moderation, and temper courage with humanity."

Devereux having expressed his grateful thanks to the Lady Bolebec and her noble brother, observed, that whatsoever blame might be imputed to him for having espoused the cause of Montfort, the temerity of having presumed to enter the gates of Glandon Tower was solely attributable to the Earl of St. Clair; but that the kindness he had experienced induced him to solicit the favour of being permitted
to

to continue at the Tower at least until the next morning. He was accordingly lodged in a magnificent apartment ; but the tumult of his mind, excited by the vicissitudes which in such rapid succession had so variously affected him, kept him awake during the whole of the night ; and even when exhausted nature sunk at last into oblivious slumbers, the fleeting images of the past still crowded upon the imagination, and filled it with wild extravagances innumerable.

One while he was pursuing his journey to Glandon, eager with the hope of distinguishing himself in an attack, the success of which he hoped would recommend him to the friendship of the potent Montfort, and crown him, even at the commencement of his military career, with unfading laurels ; then he fancied that he approached the scene of action, joined in the attack, and, amidst the clangor of arms and the groans of the wounded, trampled on heaps of dead, and waded to glory through fields of carnage.

nage. The succeeding vision perhaps presented a melancholy reverse: his imagination now pourtrayed the gloomy vault, where, huddled amongst an undistinguished heap of half-decayed corpses, he lay weltering in the pangs of excruciating agony, or, with short and convulsive sighs, witnessed the last motion of life's purple tide, without one pitying friend to sooth his anguish, or close his dying eyes. Again would a brilliant vision salute his imagination, and change the awful scene. The gloomy vault, the mangled bodies of the slain, were changed in an instant for a display of gorgeous magnificence, the luxuriance of nature, and all the soft appliances of ease and luxury; flowery banks, sheltered by groves of trees, whose umbrageous branches, waved by gentle zephyrs, diffused the most fragrant odours; streams of pellucid water, rivals of the famed Hydaspes, meandering through irriguous valleys, rich in all the bounties of Ceres and Pomona, formed an Elysium, such as the poets feigned, where,
stretched

stretched at his ease, the gentle Devereux seemed to repose in soft and uninterrupted slumbers. Scarcely had the pleasing illusion tranquillized the disturbance of his former dream, when some other strange mutation snatched him from this banquet of ideal happiness, and again involved him in some arduous enterprise, hurried the tide of his spirits into fresh irregularities, or involved him in new labyrinths of perplexity.

Thus passed the night ; but the return of morning renewed the calm and pleasing sensations of gratitude and admiration, with which the generosity of St. Clair had filled his mind ; and he hastened to pay the homage of his respectful acknowledgment.

St. Clair and Bohun conducted Devereux through the principal apartments of the Tower, and pointed out to him the abode of Sir Michael Fettiplace, desiring him to inform the Earl of Leicester that they were prepared for his reception ; but, at the same time, that they desired peace rather than hostility, and had no other object in detaining

taining the prisoners now at Glandon, than to provide for security from a future attack, but were disposed at all times to treat for their liberation.

After many expressions of personal regard, Devereux having respectfully taken leave of Lady Bolebec, the Earl, and Sir Humphrey Bohun, who sent a message by him to his father, the Earl of Hereford, intimating his desire to see him as a friend, but by no means as an enemy, this accomplished young gentleman was conducted to the principal gate of the Tower by the Earl of St. Clair, who, in the instant of his departure, presented to him six of the troopers who had accompanied him from Warkworth, to whom their liberty had been given, that they might escort Captain Devereux on the road.

CHAP. VI.

WHILST these scenes were passing at Glandon Tower, Sir Hugh de Bolebec, who had in vain attempted to bring the enemy to an engagement, was recalled by Prince Edward, to join the main body of the army near Taunton.

Simon de Montfort, intent on striking a decisive blow by an attack on the Prince himself, had directed his commanders to avoid any engagement with the enemy, until (the two armies having concentrated their whole strength) he might, by one mighty effort, become master of the kingdom.

Montfort,

Montfort, with his principal forces, was now marching towards Worcestershire; and being desirous of consulting with Fitz-Parnell, the latter, accompanied by his brother, had privately left the fortress of Warkworth, and was gone to meet the Earl of Leicester at Warwick Castle, when the enterprising spirit of St. Clair prompted him to decoy a party of the garrison of Warkworth, by the stratagem before related.

On the return of Fitz-Parnell, the next day, he was astonished at the sight of the order which had been sent in the name of Sir Henry Fettiplace, having himself left that officer in attendance upon the Earl of Leicester, at the head-quarters of his army; and immediately suspected that it was a scheme of the enemy, to draw out some of his forces, in order that an attack might be made upon Warkworth Castle in their absence.

Impressed with this notion, for it was impossible for him to conjecture that there

could have been, any design to transfer part of his forces directly into a garrison of the enemy, orders were immediately issued for scouts to prepare themselves to examine the several roads leading to the Castle, and give notice of the appearance of troops.

The utmost uncertainty prevailed during the day, and it was increased rather than diminished by the approach of night. Darkness was more favourable to cover a besieging enemy, than to secure the fortress from an assault.

At the interview which had taken place between the Earl of Leicester and the Fitz-Parnells, he became apprized of the capture of Sir Michael Fettiplace; but having neither time to attempt his deliverance in person, nor troops to spare for that purpose, he reluctantly submitted to leave his friend in the dungeon of Glandon Tower, without making any effort at present to assist him.

Sir Hugh de Bolebec, disappointed of
bringing

bringing the enemy to a battle, hastened to rejoin Prince Edward and the Earl of Gloucester, with all his forces. The route by which he marched brought him within twenty miles of Glandon Tower. The temptation of paying a visit to his beloved consort was too strong to be resisted. He quitted the host in the dusk of the evening, attended only by one servant, committing the command, in his absence, to Sir Arthur Pembroke.

It was midnight before Sir Hugh reached the gates of his mansion. The servant who attended him sounded the bugle at the gate; and the faithful Stephen, looking out at a casement, recognised his much-respected master, even before he heard the sound of his voice.

The meeting between Sir Hugh and his Lady was most affectionate; and he rejoiced to find under his roof his steady and valuable friend, Sir Humphrey Bohun.

In the morning, conferring with the Earl of St. Clair and Bohun on the subject of

the prisoners in custody, Sir Hugh, accompanied by Bohun, visited the apartment in which Sir Michael Fettiplace was confined. The principal object of this visit was to prevail on him to join the army of Prince Edward, on which condition Bolebec promised him his freedom without ransom ; and farther, that he would bury all past hostilities in oblivion, and recommend him to the favour of the Prince.

Fettiplace, however, rejected the proposal, and declared that it was his unalterable intention to live and die a firm and consistent supporter of the cause in which Simon de Montfort and himself had originally commenced hostilities.

Bolebec, who, although distinguished by a most compassionate disposition, possessed great firmness of mind, and a peculiar dignity of manner, which always added great weight to what he said, told Sir Michael Fettiplace, that although he himself engaged in the present contest solely with a desire to give peace to a distracted nation,
and

and establish the rights both of the crown and the people, on a basis which he hoped would hereafter remain unshaken, he was far from wishing to impose on any man the necessity of subscribing to the same sentiments; that the rejection of the offer he had made should neither tempt him to violate the laws of humanity or of compassion, nor subject an unfortunate gentleman to any additional rigour than that of his present confinement; but as the attack in which Sir Michael was made prisoner must be considered rather as a personal wrong, than the consequence of political animosity, in leaving him to the custody of his friend, Sir Humphrey Bohun, he would not conceal his determination, that if any similar attempt should be made upon Glandon Tower, the lives of the prisoners should answer for such an outrage.

In conclusion, he earnestly recommended Sir Michael Fettiplace to reflect on the consequences which would result to his
H 4 family.

family and connexions, if, as there was reason to expect, the Earl of Leicester's forces should be defeated; in which case, his partizans and adherents would be inevitably exposed to the just resentment of an injured and offended sovereign.

Bolebec was unwilling that his brother-in-law, the Earl of St. Clair, should waste his time in inglorious leisure, and lose his share of the honours of a victory, which the friends and supporters of the Prince already anticipated, from the number of their forces, as well as the approved courage, skill, and fidelity, of the officers who commanded them; and therefore proposed that he should accompany him to the army, leaving Sir Humphrey Bohun to take the command of the garrison at Glandon Tower, for which post, whether his matured experience, distinguished valour, or zealous loyalty, were considered, he was pre-eminently qualified, although the advanced period of his life rendered him less fit for more active service.

The

The Lady Bolebec possessed too much of the martial spirit of her ancestors, to suffer any personal considerations to interfere, when the voice of honour called ; she therefore yielded a ready assent to the suggestions of Sir Hugh ; and on the next day, Bolebec and the Earl left Glandon Tower, and hastened, with the utmost expedition, to rejoin the forces, which were now within a few days march of the head-quarters of Prince Edward's army.

CHAP. VII.

ON the return of Devereux to Warkworth Castle, he found the garrison in the utmost consternation, not only on account of his absence, but in consequence of the report which had been made by one of the scouts, who, on the appearance of Devereux and his six attendants, had been seized with a panic, which represented them to his imagination as a numerous and formidable body; and having accordingly returned to the Castle, in great haste, on announcing this intelligence, the governor ordered every man to his post, and was waiting, sword in hand, to receive the enemy.

Great

Great as had been the chagrin and vexation of Sir Walter Fitz-Parnell at the stratagem by which he had been deprived of the assistance of a brave young officer, and twenty of his best soldiers, his surprise was still *greater*, when he heard, from the lips of Devereux, the history of the transaction; and the generosity of the Earl of St. Clair became the topic of universal admiration and applause, even among those who had been the most inveterate enemies of his name and family.

Such an instance of liberality, in any age, might be esteemed a proof of true greatness of soul; but at a period when mild and benevolent feelings were scarcely so much as heard of, it formed a new feature in the English character, which *astonished* as much, or perhaps even more, than it *delighted* those who heard of it; for there is always a greater disposition in mankind to admire virtue than to imitate it.

Glandon Tower was now for awhile freed from all apprehensions of attack from

the enemy ; for almost every man in that part of the country, capable of bearing arms, was gone to join either one party or the other ; and Montfort's garrisons were reduced to the lowest establishment possible, in order to augment the forces with which he was desirous to meet Prince Edward.

The hopes and dependance of the whole English people rested on the event of the expected battle.

Those who had long groaned under the iron hand of tyranny, in the oppressions of the Barons, by whom the supreme authority had been usurped, were eager for emancipation ; whilst those whose opposition to the King's power had been originally excited by similar hardships, having for some time enjoyed what almost all men call the sweets of power, were prompted to retain possession of it, even at the hazard of extermination ; and a third party, consisting of the more sober and reflecting of the community, although, in
common

common with all good men, they deplored the calamities of war, looked forward to the battle as a great evil, necessary to be sustained, in order to produce general good, and, by giving a preponderance to the power of one of the competitors, lay the foundation for future tranquillity, and put an end to those shocking and disgraceful scenes, which always result from the exercise of a spirit of lawless anarchy, unrestrained by the fear of punishment, and unawed by moral principles.

Montfort's army had now approached the vale of Evesham; and after mutual defiance had been pronounced, as the insulting prelude to actual engagement, the army, at whose head was Prince Edward in person, was drawn out in order of battle.

Historians have related, with what ardent zeal and enthusiastic courage the heroes of those time distinguished themselves; and it is well known what savage fury was always displayed in conflicts of this nature. Each
seemed

seemed to seek his opponent with the most malicious perseverance, and to glut his revenge with the ferocity of the tiger.

The instruments of offence, rude and clumsy, were calculated to add misery to the sufferings of the wounded; and the atrocities committed on the field of battle, were almost exceeded by the cruelties practised by those who won the day.

Barbed arrows, knotted clubs, and massive battle-axes, were among the horrid instruments of destruction used in the field; chains, torture, and mutilation, the means of revenge in the dungeons of the vanquished.

Humanity would be inclined to draw a veil over such scenes, were it not for the moral which they present. But they shew the benefits of civilization and culture, the advantages of social intercourse, and the blessings of rational religion. The refinements of science have extended their influence over the "ensanguined plain;" sympathy has smoothed even the rugged
paths

paths of death ; and rational religion, which is true philosophy, has stayed the rack of persecution, by the spring of Christian charity and benevolence. And although, it must be confessed, that in the progress of society towards its present improved condition, new evils have arisen, and only a different tone has been given to the vices and failings of humankind, without eradicating them, it cannot be denied, that notwithstanding the atrocities which have occasionally disgraced even modern times, notwithstanding the lust after domination still rages in the human heart, and notwithstanding the murderous sword is even now unsheathed, the present age has afforded the most brilliant instances of philanthropy, moderation, and universal benevolence, which have ever adorned the annals of the world, and particularly among our own countrymen.

Let us remember, with becoming respect, the conduct of the gallant Heathfield, who, in that memorable siege, which lasted three
5 years

years without intermission, exhibited to the eyes of France and Spain, and to an amphitheatre of princes, who beheld the glorious scene, an illustrious example of British courage and humanity, in the vigour of his military operations, and in rescuing his vanquished foes from a watery grave.

Let the naval heroes of the age in which we live justify the honest pride with which our countrymen may boast, that amidst all the levities and follies of the present age, and all the differences and divisions which party spirit and political intrigue have generated, or which even faction at home or hostility abroad may have excited among us, there is one *principle*, in which all Britons uniformly agree, that sympathy for the distressed, compassion to the unfortunate, and generosity towards a vanquished enemy, form the true criterion of valour.

To return to our narrative—The contest between the two armies was long and bloody. The Earl of Gloucester, who led the right wing of the Prince's army,
encountered

encountered that division of the enemy which was under the command of Sir Hugh Lacy, a distinguished veteran, who opposed his forces to those of the Earl, with so much prudence and valour, that after a severe conflict, Gloucester was compelled to give way, and a great slaughter ensued.

In the meantime, the centre of Montfort's line with great difficulty maintained its ground against the shock of Prince Edward's troops, animated by his presence, and emulous to distinguish themselves in the eyes of their heroic chief.

Bohun with his foresters gave a turn to the fortunes of the day. Sorely galled by their arrows, the right wing of the enemy fled in every direction; and St. Clair, who had signalised himself by prodigies of valour, having slain one of the principal standard-bearers, in the very heat of the battle, and wrapping the colour about him, bore it away in triumph, pursued the fugitives with a great slaughter, until a reinforcement coming to their assistance,
they

they were at length rallied; and in turn falling upon their opponents, with the most determined fury, St. Clair, surrounded by a multitude of the enemy, his horse wounded by a spear, and rendered wholly ungovernable; the gallant Earl was taken prisoner.

It was in this battle that Prince Edward, in the heat of action, discovered his royal father, King Henry, at the very instant when, having been previously wounded in the shoulder, he was dismounted, and on the point of being slain.

The despairing monarch, in order to stay the hand of the soldiers, who were about to pierce him to the heart, called out, "I am Henry of Winchester, your king;" and these words being heard by Prince Edward, he immediately effected the rescue of his father, and, dismounting, paid him homage on the spot.

The troops of Montfort being at length defeated, and himself slain, the conquerors remained on the field of battle, until they had.

had returned thanks for so signal a victory, which promised to be productive of the happiest consequences.

Prince Edward having thus become the arbiter of the kingdom, was principally intent on the organization of the civil government; and well knowing that the submission of the remaining malcontents would soon follow the news of Montfort's death, hastened towards the capital, in order to establish such regulations as seemed best calculated for insuring future tranquillity.

Bolebec was left with a considerable force, to effect the reduction of Hereford Castle, and a few other fortresses, which were still in the hands of Montfort's friends.

St. Clair had been hurried away from the field, and, with other prisoners, conveyed towards Oxford; but the intelligence of Montfort's death having reached the party before their arrival there, Lacy's men, who had the charge of the prisoners, fearful of a rescue, in case the conquerors should direct their march through Oxford, determined

determined to pass by that city, and conduct their prisoners to Wallingford Castle, which was at that time under the command of Lacy himself.

On their arrival there, they found that the defeat of the Earl of Leicester's forces had been much more complete than they had before suspected. Lacy, who had been obliged to fly from the field of battle, with the utmost precipitancy, had reached Wallingford before the prisoners were brought in; and rejoiced that by having obtained possession of so many of his enemies, he had at least secured to himself favourable terms of capitulation, and indemnity for his late proceedings. He, however, caused the Earl of St. Clair and his fellow-prisoners to be led immediately to a gloomy dungeon, where they were indiscriminately confined together, and allowed for their sustenance only a small portion of the coarsest fare. Their drink was nothing but water, their beds were of straw and rushes, and the humidity of their place of confinement increased

increased its wretchedness, and the dangers of their captivity. Remonstrances, however, were in vain, for Lacy possessed none of the softer qualities of the mind, and was wholly a stranger to any feelings but those of avarice and selfishness.

When Bolebec understood that the Earl of St. Clair was a prisoner at Wallingford, he resolved to proceed thither in person, at the head of his forces, so soon as Hereford Castle should have been surrendered to the Prince's arms.

The defeat of Montfort had already damped the spirit of the confederate Barons, and the city of Hereford surrendered on the first summons. Bolebec took possession of the Castle, in form, the keys being delivered to him by the governor, on his knees. The soldiery, admitted everywhere by the citizens, were regaled with the best provisions which the country afforded: but Bolebec, knowing the advantage of striking a sudden and unexpected blow, was anxious to attempt the liberation
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of the Earl of St. Clair and his companions, before the enemy had time to recover from the panic into which they had been struck by their recent defeat. He therefore allowed only two days rest to his men, before he proceeded towards Wallingford.

The exact discipline which Sir Hugh de Bolebec had always kept up in the army under his command, and the veneration which the troops entertained for him as their leader, enabled him to accomplish this long march with comparatively little inconvenience, and in a much shorter space of time than in those days was usually consumed in the moving of troops to such a distance.

When the advanced guard arrived within about a mile of the town, Sir Philip Forrescue dispatched a trumpet, to summon the Castle, in the King's name.

The governor, who, though a staunch friend of Montfort, was well aware of the dangerous condition to which their party was now reduced, sent for answer, that he
already

already held the Castle for the King, and would not deliver the possession of it, unless by an order from his Grace himself.

Bohun, suspecting that this evasion was only for the purpose of gaining time, perhaps in hopes of the arrival of additional parties of the scattered forces of Montfort, who might render an assault more difficult, caused Sir Philip Fortescue to draw still nearer to the town.

A second summons was then sent to Lacy, with conditions of surrender; to which he replied, by demanding twenty-four hours to consider of them.

Bohun now advanced with the body of his forces, which being drawn up within sight of the walls, made a very gallant appearance. They were composed of brave men, flushed with recent success, and animated by the presence of officers to whom they were firmly and zealously attached.

A third summons was then sent to the governor, stating, that unless the gates were opened to Sir Hugh de Bolebec in half an hour,

hour, he would enter the town by storm ; for which he desired the governor to observe that he was amply prepared, as might be seen by the number of his forces.

Lacy, who beheld from the battlements of the Castle the forces with which he had to contend, and knowing the high and determined spirit of Bolebec, moreover reflecting on the weakness of his own garrison, and the disinclination of the troops under his command to hazard themselves in so hopeless a cause, dispatched an officer to Sir Hugh, with proposals to set open the gates of the town, and deliver up all the prisoners in his custody, provided indemnity were promised him for the past, and security of his person and property from molestation or injury, engaged for on the word and honour of Bolebec.

To this proposal Sir Hugh consented, on condition that Lacy would mount such of the prisoners who had before served on horseback on his own horses, and himself conduct them in person out of the gates of
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the town; his own soldiers laying down their arms, and remaining at the disposal of Bolebec, unless they were disposed to retire to their respective homes, under an engagement, to be guaranteed by Lacy, that they would not again take up arms against King Henry or Prince Edward, and their respective officers, especially of the houses of St. Clair and Bolebec.

Lacy, glad to escape the danger which threatened his refusal, immediately assented to these conditions; and, in order to ingratiate himself with the conqueror, not only mounted his prisoner St. Clair on a fine horse, agreeable to the stipulation, but habited the Earl in a rich coat of mail, and presented him with an antique sword, which had long been preserved in the Castle as a relic of the great King Arthur.

Thus accoutred, at the head of his fellow-prisoners, and attended by the governor himself, the Earl of St. Clair was conducted to the gates of the town, where he was cordially embraced by Sir Hugh de Bolebec,

who having received the keys at the hands of the governor, immediately presented them to St. Clair, and nominated him keeper of the town, until the King's pleasure should be known.

The two Knights having pledged themselves to each other in the most solemn manner, by laying their right-hands on the holy gospels, to observe strictly the conditions which had been agreed upon, proceeded through the town to the Castle; where the garrison, laying down their arms at the feet of Bolebec, were replaced by his own regiment; and the remainder of the army took up their quarters in the town and neighbouring villages.

While apartments were preparing in the Castle for the accommodation of the principal officers, the Earl of St. Clair, accompanied by Sir Philip Fortescue, Sir Marmaduke Langdale, Sir Ambrose de Hillingdon, Sir William Fitz-Osborne, Sir Nigel de Chillingplace, and the rest of Bolebec's chief followers, went to the church, and
there,

there, before the altar, in the presence of the principal inhabitants of the town, took an oath to govern them with fidelity, and to deliver up possession of the fortifications to no other person save the King himself, or his rightful heir, Edward the Prince, or those whom they should lawfully appoint, but to the utmost of his power defend them against the attacks of the adherents of Simon late Earl of Leicester, and all other the King's enemies.

This ceremony being over, and mass celebrated by the abbot of Wallingford, they returned with great pomp to the Castle.

Night coming on, every one was glad to retire to rest, and none more so than the Earl of St. Clair, who had been thus rescued from the gloom of a dungeon, and exchanged his rushy pallet for a bed of down.

The next day, St. Clair made a magnificent entertainment at the Castle ; and those who had been his companions in the dun-

geon had now the honourable distinction of being seated at a table, expressly prepared for them, immediately below that at which the Earl himself dined, having on his right-hand Sir Hugh de Bolebec, and on his left the abbot of Wallingford, Lacy the former governor sitting on the opposite side, and the officers of Bolebec's army placed according to their respective rank.

The death of Montfort crushed the hopes of his partizans; and those few strongholds which, in different parts of the kingdom, were still in the hands of his adherents, speedily surrendered to Prince Edward.

Bolebec remained, for the present, at Wallingford, until he should learn the intention of the Prince with regard to the disposal of the forces under his command; but he did not neglect to acquaint the Lady Bolebec with his success in rescuing the Earl of St. Clair from the dungeon of Wallingford Castle.

King

King Henry being restored to the exercise of his authority, the forces were ordered to be disbanded, and the prisoners released. The Castle, with what was called the Honour of Wallingford, was bestowed upon the gallant St. Clair, as a reward for his services.

Sir Hugh de Bolebec at length prepared to return to Glandon Tower. His vassals were so numerous, that they had contributed a great proportion of the forces which had accompanied him to Wallingford; and after the principal officers had taken their leave, and departed with their respective followers, the attendants of Sir Hugh were so numerous, that the cavalcade which followed him into his own county resembled the march of an army, rather than the train of a nobleman.

The Lady Bolebec, apprized of their expected arrival, had been employed many days in preparing for the reception of Bolebec and his followers. Sir Michael Fettiplace and the rest of the prisoners had

been already discharged from their confinement; and the whole neighbourhood was filled with rejoicings upon the happy event of a peace, to which the prudence and valour of Sir Hugh de Bolebec had so much contributed.

According to the usages of our ancestors, the hospitalities practised in seasons of festivity extended to all who were disposed to partake of them. The doors of the mansion were thrown open to every stranger who was inclined to enter, and he was welcomed to a participation of the good cheer always plentifully provided on such occasions.

The Lady Bolebec met her beloved husband at the gate of the Tower, leading the beautiful Isabella in one hand, and carrying in her arms the little Edward. Sir Humphrey Bohun accompanied her; and all those who so lately formed a garrison under his command, as soldiers, now dressed in liveries, attended to do honour to the guests invited to Glandon Tower.

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The Earl of St. Clair attended his warlike brother; and scarcely had they entered the Tower, now the mansion of peace, before they were joined by the Earl of Hereford and his son Devereux, who hastened to pay their grateful respects to a family to whose generosity they considered themselves so much indebted.

Numerous were the visitors, and the provisions were ample. For nine successive days, the sounds of festivity gladdened the hospitable mansion. The night was cheered with melody, and rural sports of every description amused and entertained the different classes that formed the happy group.

On the last day of the entertainment, the company was even more numerous than it had ever been before. Many of the monks from the neighbouring convents participated in the good cheer, and increased the throng which filled almost every part of this extensive building.

At the approach of evening, the com-
pany

pany began to disperse ; but it was not until late that the Tower was cleared of its numerous visitors, who departed greatly pleased with the noble hospitality of which they had partaken.

When the Lady Bolebec retired to her chamber, she was somewhat surprised at the absence of her female attendant, who was entrusted with the care of the infant Edward.

The fair Isabella, who was too young to be permitted to join in the crowd with which the Tower had been filled during so many days, had remained shut up in her mother's apartments the whole time. From her Lady Bolebec received the information that Agnes, the servant, had carried Edward down the great staircase, a long time before, and told her that she should speedily return.

An inquiry was immediately made after the child and his nurse ; but no intelligence could be procured respecting either of them. The alarm thus excited increased
every

every moment, and was aggravated by the darkness of the night, which prevented the possibility of making so strict a search in the neighbourhood of the Tower as was desirable.

The Lady Bolebec, whom we have seen exercising all the fortitude of the stronger sex, undismayed by the most imminent dangers, and immoveable amidst the difficulties with which she had been surrounded, lost in a single hour all her firmness, and fell, apparently lifeless, into the arms of her attendants. Sir Hugh, informed of the occasion of her alarm, attempted in vain to comfort her, with the hope of soon obtaining some intelligence respecting the lost infant. At the same time, he himself suffered the greatest degree of uneasiness, and dispatched his attendants, in every direction, to search for Agnes and the child.

The night was passed in anxiety and agitation, such as only parents can feel; and the succeeding day brought no tidings to

alleviate the sufferings of the afflicted parents.

The Lady Bolebec scarcely recovered herself to a consciousness of her loss, without immediately relapsing into a state of distressing incoherence, and melancholy insensibility. Sir Hugh, who, amidst the horrors of war, had remained unappalled, wrung by the keenest tortures of parental anguish, melted into tears, and almost sunk under the poignancy of his distress.

Victory had crowned him with glory. Surrounded by admiring friends, whose regard for his virtues was even heightened by their being witnesses of his valour, high in the confidence of his Prince, and possessing the love and admiration of his fellow-subjects, this brave general having passed through the storms and tempests which, for a season, overspread his native land, had lived to see the termination of those unhappy differences by which the country had been so long agitated, and was now retiring into the bosom of domestic tranquillity,

tranquillity, and the rational enjoyment of life, when a sudden blow seemed to have been struck, which threatened to embitter the remainder of his days, and seemed, by its uncommon severity, to mark him as an object of Heaven's peculiar displeasure.

The sun, which had risen upon him with cheering splendor, and diffused comfort and joy amidst the circle of his assembled guests, had withdrawn its vivifying rays, and exchanged the brilliancy of the prospect for darkness, disappointment, and sorrow.—“How soon are our brightest views obscured! and, when basking in the sunshine of health, and glowing with the comforts of prosperity, how suddenly may the iron hand of misfortune fall upon us, destroy our hopes, and banish our happiness!”

Day succeeded day. The morning opened with inquiries, and the evening closed in disappointment. No tidings were heard of the darling of his father's hope, the completion of his mother's joy.

When the first transports of surprise and perturbation had given place to calmer moments of reflection, it was feared that the child and the nurse had both fallen into the moat which surrounded Glandon Tower, and had perished, without being able to obtain assistance or give alarm.

This indeed was scarcely probable, on account of the number of persons in and about the mansion at the time when Agnes quitted Lady Bolebec's apartment. Some of them must have witnessed the accident, or have been near enough to hear their voices, if they had called for assistance. The moat was examined with the utmost care ; but it led to no discovery.

Isabella, who was of an age to feel all the sensibility of affection, was almost frantic with distress, when she understood the cause of her mother's grief, and ran from one of her parents to the other, in vain attempting to sooth their sorrow, or to conceal her own. Neither the voice of friendship nor
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the reasonings of philosophy could soften the pangs they felt.

St. Clair and Bohun could only join in melancholy condolence, or assist in forming useless conjectures respecting this extraordinary occurrence. The only circumstance which could lead even to an idea whether the departure of the servant had been designed or compulsory, was, that a considerable quantity of the child's clothes were missing; but, on the other hand, it could not be ascertained that any of the apparel belonging to Agnes had been taken away. Scarcely any light was thrown upon the mysterious transaction by this discovery. If it led to a belief that the child had been taken away by some stratagem, in which the nurse was a party concerned, in opposition to this idea it might be urged, that Agnes would then have contrived to remove at least some of her own apparel also. Isabella, on being questioned, uniformly declared, that when Agnes quitted Lady Bolebec's apartment, with Edward in

her arms, she took neither bundle nor package of any kind with her.

It has been already stated, that the Earl of Hereford and his son were among the guests assembled at Glandon Tower, to partake of the festivities in the late season of rejoicing. This respectable nobleman, who had remained shut up in his mansion on the borders of Wales, during the late disturbances, had not, without great reluctance, permitted his son, at the earnest entreaty of Montfort, to accept a commission in his army, himself entertaining an opinion, that more benefit was likely to accrue from the reduction of the power of the Barons, than from supporting their pretensions; and therefore secretly favouring the cause of Prince Edward, although his advanced age rendered him unable to take an active part in the contest. But when Montfort was killed, the Earl was so well aware that the power of the Fitz-Parnells must soon yield to the opposing voice of the country, that, fearful lest the
arrogance

arrogance of those two nobles might prompt them to engage in some new scheme to disturb the government, and avenge their uncle's death, he sent his positive commands to Devereux to return home immediately.

He wisely reflected, that the same spirit which, under recent circumstances, had been excused, under the title of patriotism, might hereafter, without much perversion, subject him who exercised it to the appellation of a traitor.

Devereux instantly obeyed his father's summons. He was too well acquainted with the turbulent and revengeful disposition of Sir Walter Fitz-Parnell and his brother, to suppose that they would long remain quiet; and their fixed and rooted animosity towards the family of Bolebec, which they took no pains to conceal, rendered his abode at Warkworth the more uncomfortable, since the obligations under which he had been placed by the magnanimity of the Earl of St. Clair and his sister, had entitled them to the first place in his esteem.

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It would have been equally disgraceful to his honour, and repugnant to the best feelings of his heart, to have even witnessed any efforts to injure those to whom he was bound by the strongest ties of regard and gratitude. He hastened, therefore, to his paternal seat; and when, in his account of the campaign in which he had been engaged, he related to the Earl his father the generous treatment he had met with at Glandon Tower, the venerable old man determined to accompany his son among those who appeared the foremost to offer their congratulations on the safe return of Sir Hugh de Bolebec, after the great event to which his valour and prowess had so essentially contributed, and to thank the Earl of St. Clair in person for the kindness he had shewn to his son.

The affliction in which Bolebec and his Lady were involved sensibly affected both Devereux and his father; but their counsels were unavailing; and as time alone seemed to be the balm for such a wound :

as :

as that which these worthy parents had received, Hereford and Devereux would have taken their leave of Glandon, but for the solicitation of St. Clair, who, although he agreed with them that seasons of distress are but ill adapted to social intercourse, justly entertained an opinion that solitude may cherish grief, but never cures it. He thought it therefore an act of true friendship to remain at Glandon Tower himself, and easily prevailed on the Earl of Hereford and Sir Humphrey Bohun to continue there also, until the grief in which the family were at present plunged should have subsided into a softer and less painful melancholy.

Devereux wanted no consideration of this kind to induce him to remain near the Earl of St. Clair, between whom and himself there had already sprung up a sincere friendship, founded on that best of all principles, a *becoming gratitude for an important benefit, disinterestedly conferred.*

The sceptre having been again placed in
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the hands of King Henry, he received the homage of his subjects, now once more returned to their allegiance; and, in order to prevent future complaints, a new branch of the legislature, which had scarcely entered upon their important office, when the confusion into which the nation had been thrown interrupted their consultations, again met for the dispatch of public business. This was the first rude sketch of that great design which future ages completed, in the constitution of the English Parliament.

CHAP. VIII.

WHILST Prince Edward was thus, by his prowess in arms, securing to his father the possession of the supreme authority, he himself acquired such a degree of military enthusiasm, that, disdaining the stillness of inglorious ease, and tainted by the superstition of the age, the affairs of his native country were scarcely settled, when he formed the resolution of engaging in the crusade, or, according to the phraseology of that day, “to take the cross.”

Of all the absurdities into which mankind have been betrayed by the influence of superstition, this was perhaps the greatest.

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To fight for the acquirement of territorial property and dominion, under the banners of the author of Christianity, who emphatically declared, that *his kingdom was not of this world*, was then considered as the sum and substance of true religion; and the utmost turpitude of conduct and dereliction of morality was supposed to be expiated, by devoting a portion of life to severe and voluntary penance, or applying the superfluities of wealth in support of the romantic scheme of exterminating infidelity, and compelling the consciences of others to conform to their own tenets.

The fashion of a court, however absurd, always readily finds imitators; and that which sober reason and reflection would have rejected and condemned, is often practised with enthusiasm, where the example of the great can be pleaded in its defence.

The folly of making pilgrimages to Jerusalem would have soon yielded to the influence of common sense, if princes and nobles.

nobles had not joined in the common frenzy of the times.

The determination of Prince Edward to join the crusade, kindled a similar spirit in the minds of many of those noble youths who already had been his companions in arms. Amongst them was the gallant St. Clair, who, no longer having an opportunity of signalling his valour at home, resolved to prove those two great qualities of a Christian warrior, patience and fortitude, by enduring hunger and thirst, and cold and nakedness, in order to have the satisfaction of encountering the Saracens in Palestine.

Devereux felt a strong inclination to accompany his friend, to share his dangers, and participate in the glory of exterminating infidels from the Holy Land. At that time, no one inquired whether it were consistent with the benign and pacific spirit of the founder of his faith to defend it by the destruction of myriads of human beings, or whether the precepts of the gospel encouraged

couraged that ferocious bigotry which prompts to the most barbarous deeds. But the Earl of Hereford was a nobleman who superadded to the best natural understanding a taste for the acquirement of knowledge, seldom to be found at that era, and the impolicy of encouraging this ecclesiastical project for subjecting Europe to the dominion of the papacy had not escaped his penetrating mind. Wise, prudent, and accomplished himself, he had endeavoured to make those great advantages conducive to the improvement of his son; and accordingly instilled into his mind continually those liberal principles which operate silently and imperceptibly to subdue the influences of superstition.

The ardour which Devereux felt on the present occasion, was that of a young man desirous to signalize himself in such a manner as to insure the esteem of his friends, and the admiration of his country. It was not wholly free from the taint of superstition; but religious phrenzy and intolerant

ant zeal had far less influence on the mind of the young hero, than the generous claims of friendship, and the laudable desire of honourable fame.

Knowing that the sentiments of his father were in direct opposition to his own wishes in this particular, and apprehensive that the Earl would not, without great difficulty, be induced to consent that he should join in the expedition, Devereux entreated Sir Humphrey Bohun to exert his influence in his behalf. Bohun, who considered the crusade merely in the light of a military campaign, without much regarding its political tendency or consequences, and, naturally fond of arms himself, readily undertook the task; but although he urged his suit with all the eloquence he was master of, the Earl of Hereford persisted in his resolution not to sanction a proceeding which he thought repugnant to the principles of reason and justice; but concluded his answer to Sir Humphrey by assuring him, that there was no other request which
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he could have made to him, nor any other indulgence which his son could have desired, that he would have refused.

Devereux, however, finding it in vain to oppose the will of his father, reluctantly submitted: and, the time for the departure of St. Clair being arrived, took leave of him with the deepest regret. The Lady Bolebec also, who had not yet recovered from the shock of her afflicting loss, seemed to suffer a renewal of her grief at parting with her brother. A sort of melancholy anticipation of misfortunes seemed to cover, as with a dark cloud, the prospect of the future, and to threaten fresh, though at present unknown, calamities.

St. Clair took the nearest road towards the southern coast, and embarked, with numerous of his fellow-adventurers, to seek new scenes of military glory, by a long and arduous course of toil and patience.

After the departure of the Earl, Sir Humphrey Bohun was every day more and
more

more importunate with his friends at Glandon to accompany him to his Castle of Mordeford, there to endeavour, by a change of scene, to divert their attention from the melancholy subject of their domestic loss, of which everything about Glandon Tower was continually reminding them.

Sir Humphrey had been so long absent from Mordeford, that he was also anxious, on his own account, to return to his family-mansion, where his accustomed hospitalities had been long suspended, and the want of them severely felt by the neighbourhood.

Bohun had survived his Lady and a large family, who all died in the prime of life; but he was much esteemed in his county, and possessed considerable property and influence there.

He had early taken part against Simon de Montfort in the late disturbances, both from a personal regard for the King, and a dislike which he had long entertained of some of the principal and leading persons who had

associated themselves with Leicester on that occasion.

Bohun was a hardy old soldier, who neither dissembled his animosities nor attempted to justify them. He had succeeded to the quarrels and feuds of his ancestors, together with their estates ; and he cherished them with almost equal care. If he did not strive to subdue the feelings of hostility, which, without any personal provocation, he had thus inconsiderately assumed, neither did he seek new quarrels, nor embroil himself in fresh disputes. If he were but little disposed to conciliate an adversary, it was rather to be attributed to the haughty spirit which he had acquired as an inheritance, than to any malignity of disposition, or implacability of temper ; for no man could be more generous in his nature, or less disposed to take offence at slight or unintentional provocations.

He loved arms as a profession, and entertained as nice a sense of honour as perhaps any person of his day. He considered
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a promise sacred ; and though prudent and sagacious, was neither morose nor suspicious.

His friendships were, of course, few, but they were lasting. No man had more firmness, more determined bravery, nor less of the coxcomb, (if a modern word may be applied to the description of an ancient character), than Sir Humphrey Bohun.

His generosity was devoid of affectation, his economy free from meanness, his manner open and sincere, his charity unsullied by ostentation, and his religion less tinctured with bigotry than was usual at the period in which he lived.

His conversation was pleasant and interesting, more blunt than polite, but always cheerful, and never offensive.

From his early infancy he had been affectionately attached to the Bolebec family, and numbered the father of Sir Hugh de Bolebec among his best friends. There was a considerable difference in their ages ; but the sincerest friendships are not unfre-

quently found to subsist between persons who have not lived an equal number of years in the world.

Bohun had long designed to make the son of his old friend, SirAnthony de Bolebec, the heir of his possessions. He had always manifested the greatest partiality for the little Isabella; and, after the birth of her brother Edward, had often told her that she should come and live at Mordeford, and be his daughter.

Nor was there less attachment to Sir Humphrey on the part of Bolebec and his Lady. They had long known his worth, and duly appreciated the sincerity of his friendship. His kindness and assistance in the defence of Glandon Tower, was among innumerable proofs which they had experienced, of the desire he felt to contribute to their comfort and happiness; nor was the solicitude which he expressed to divert them from the melancholy contemplation of their late misfortune without its due influence on their grateful hearts.

It has been already said, that the Earl of Hereford and Bohun were also old acquaintances; and although the manners of the former were far more highly polished than those of Sir Humphrey Bohun, their dispositions were most intimately congenial.

Bohun having at length prevailed upon the Lady Bolebec to consent to the proposed visit, insisted that the Earl of Hereford should be of the party; and in order, as he said, to make sure of him, would, in the first place, enlist his son Devereux, and carry the young gentleman away to Mordeford, to assist him in preparing for the reception of his guests.

Devereux, who was already become a great favourite with Sir Humphrey, readily agreed to this proposal; and they took their departure from Glandon Tower, with an intention to proceed by the nearest road towards Worcester, in their way to Mordeford Castle.

In their first day's journey, nothing remarkable occurred; but in the evening of

the second day, in passing a thick wood, they were disturbed by the cry of a female, in apparent distress. Hastening to the spot whence the noise proceeded, Devereux, who was foremost, perceived two men dragging along a miserable-looking female, whose hands were tied behind her, and directing their steps towards a turf-built hut at a few paces distant.

The men, as soon as they saw Devereux and the rest of his company, quitted the woman, and fled with great precipitation. Sir Humphrey and one of his servants attempted to follow them; but the thickets were so closely interwoven with each other, that the wood was totally impervious; and they were soon compelled reluctantly to give over the pursuit.

Devereux approached the woman, who appeared to have been treated with great barbarity, her face and arms being covered with blood, in consequence of being forcibly dragged through the thickets and brambles. She described herself to be the
wife

wife of a cottager belonging to a neighbouring village, and said that she was returning with the basket of provisions, for the use of her family, when, in passing the wood, she was suddenly laid hold of by the men whom they had just before seen, who took away her provisions, and threatened to strangle her, if she made the least noise; but said, that if she would go quietly with them, and obey their instructions, no violence of any kind should be offered to her, and in a few days she might return to her family.

The poor woman having heard of several robberies committed in the wood, and of one of her neighbours having been stripped there a few weeks before, besought the two ruffians to have some compassion, and be content with the provisions they had taken from her, in the purchase of which she had laid out every farthing she possessed in the world. But they disregarded her tears and entreaties, and, tying her hands behind her,

K 4

dragged.

dragged her through the wood towards the hut before mentioned.

Devereux and his attendants released the woman's hands, and, being now rejoined by Sir Humphrey Bohun, proceeded to the hut, which they found in the occupation of a haggard old woman, who was kindling a fire under a large kettle, seemingly well stored with provision.

Bohun inquired if she had not heard the cries of some person in distress, a few minutes before? to which the old woman replied, "Yes;" but she had distress enough of her own, without troubling herself about that of other people. On being asked, if she knew whether there were any robbers in the wood? she said she could not tell whether there were or not; but she had little to lose, and therefore was not afraid of robbers.

The manner in which she answered the interrogatories put to her excited in Sir Humphrey and Devereux a strong suspicion
that

that the old woman belonged to a gang of freebooters, who had probably taken up their abode in the wood.

The furniture of the hut increased this suspicion. There was a far greater variety of utensils for culinary and domestic purposes, than ordinarily fall to the lot of the poor; and numerous garments of various kinds were stowed in different parts of the cottage:

The poor woman, who, besides the wounds she had received from the bushes and brambles through which she had been dragged, was much hurt by the cords with which she had been tied, by this time also arrived at the hut; and on Devereux desiring that she might be accommodated with a seat and some assistance, the old woman churlishly replied, that she might sit down, and rest herself a little while, but could not remain there long, for if her husband should come home, he would be very angry to find any stranger in the cottage.

Sir Humphrey Bohun, taking Devereux

K. 5.

aside,

aside, in order to mention the suspicions which he entertained respecting the old woman, found that they were both of the same opinion ; and conferring together on what should be done, resolved, as they had fallen in with so extraordinary an adventure, not to depart without obtaining some information at least to gratify their curiosity. They had with them four servants, each, as well as Sir Humphrey and Devereux, armed with his dagger ; and therefore, in point of strength and number, felt sufficiently formidable to contend against any force which they were at all likely to encounter. Besides, fear made no part of Bohun's composition, and Devereux was too gallant and too brave to shrink from danger, in whatsoever shape it might be presented.

Bohun directed one of the servants to place himself in a situation where, unperceived, he might be able to give notice of the approach of any one ; then returning to the old woman, renewed his conversation with her, by asking if she had a large family

family to provide for? The hag replied, that her family consisted of her husband, herself, and her son; but that the contents of the pot were for some travellers, who, passing that way in the morning, had requested her to prepare them some supper against their return at night, and left the provisions with her for the purpose of their being dressed; that she therefore hoped they would not stay, to hinder her in what she had undertaken, as the travellers had promised to reward her well for her trouble, and her husband would be angry if she disappointed them.

“Do you know who these travellers are?” said Devereux.

“Not at all,” replied the old woman; “but they are very good gentlemen, and always pay me well for what I do for them.”

Although Bohun did not believe one word of the story about the travellers, he thought it might defeat their intention to apprehend the robbers, if he seemed to

doubt what she said. The poor woman was by this time a little recovered, and expressed much anxiety to return to her family. Sir Humphrey Bohun therefore offered to send one of his servants to accompany her, provided she would prevail on her husband to return with the servant, and take charge of the villains who had treated her in so cruel a manner, in case they were fortunate enough to fall in with them. The woman was very thankful for the kindness of this offer, and engaged to raise the whole village to the aid of her deliverers.

The village to which she was going was not more than two or three miles distant from the wood; but the poor creature was so much hurt by the bruises she had received, that on attempting to walk, she found herself totally incapable of proceeding. She was accordingly placed on horseback behind one of the servants, and in this manner set out towards her own habitation.

Night

Night was now coming on ; but it was resolved that that circumstance should not prevent Bohun and Devereux from waiting the arrival of the old woman's expected guests, particularly as they were provided with good horses, and not far from the beaten road.

The old woman expressed great uneasiness and displeasure that they did not take their leave ; and when Sir Humphrey told her that it was their intention to stay, and sup with her guests, she broke out into bitter curses and revilings.

All this only contributed to establish their belief that the story which she had told them was a mere fabrication, and to convince them that this was the rendezvous of a band of robbers.

They therefore, in plain terms, informed the old woman of their determination to watch the return of her husband and son ; and if they discovered them to be the persons who had committed the outrage which had occasioned their present visit, to deliver them.

them into the hands of justice. On the other hand, that if the travellers whom she talked of were the offenders, and she would give immediate information of all she knew respecting them, they would not only protect her from any danger she might apprehend from such a disclosure, but amply reward her for it.

The old woman solemnly protested that her husband was gone to his accustomed labour, and that she knew nothing of the travellers before mentioned, but that this was the third time of their coming to her hut, in the manner she had before mentioned; that they had brought with them several large bundles, containing the utensils and clothes they saw, and had desired her to take care of them in their absence.

Hereupon Sir Humphrey and Devereux, pretending to be well satisfied with the account she had given them, called to their servants, and, remounting their horses, civilly took leave.

They were, however, still in as much doubt;

doubt as ever respecting the truth of the story which they had heard; and even if true, it seemed to be sufficient to excite their curiosity to make a more minute inquiry. They therefore resolved to return secretly, and await the event. Having reached the confines of the wood, it was agreed upon that Devereux should return with one servant to the hut, and remain there until the coming of the travellers, while Sir Humphrey remained on horseback, occasionally looking out for the arrival of the villagers, and at intervals approaching the hut, that he might be ready to afford assistance, if it should be required.

Devereux and his servant accordingly dismounted, and, returning to the cottage, placed themselves under a small window, so that they could not only see every one who entered, but observe what was passing within.

They had remained there about half an hour, when an old man entered the hut, and, in a querulous tone, demanded if his
supper

supper were ready? The old woman, without giving any answer to his question, began an account of the unexpected visitors, who had but lately quitted the hut, and expressed great alarm for the safety of the gentlemen, whom she said she was sure they were in search of.

“ I wish with all my heart that they may find them,” said the old man; “ for no good will come of any such doings; and if they take you and your son Robert along with them, it will be no more than you both deserve.”

The old woman muttered a spiteful reply, and then asked him if he had seen Robert?

“ No,” said the old man; “ and I never desire to see him again. While he was honest, I loved him as a father ought to do; but since he has followed your advice, and enlisted into your cursed gang, he is no son of mine.”

Here the conversation was interrupted by the arrival of two men, whom, by their dress,

dress, Devereux immediately recognised to be the same persons that had escaped from their pursuit in the wood. The countenance of the old woman brightened at their approach, and she immediately expressed great satisfaction to see them safely returned—"Indeed," said she, "I thought you must have fallen into their hands, for there were no less than six of them in all. They asked me a hundred questions, and I had a difficult matter to persuade them that you were very honest. However, I managed pretty well at last; but it was a long while before I got rid of them."

"What became of the woman?" said one of the ruffians.

"Why, she was sent home behind one of the servants," said the old woman; "and I dare say you will hear no more about the matter: but if you should, you have nothing to do but roundly deny that you ever saw her, and leave the rest to me. I can say that you were fast asleep in the hut, or gone out with Robert, or make a thousand excuses."

"I do

“I do not doubt it,” said the old man. “But hark ye, my friends, let this be the last time you ever come into my hut, or, by Heaven, my old woman and you shall turn out together. I do not wish to say anything about what is past; but I will not suffer any more of your wickedness to be carried on here.”

Devereux had now heard enough, and therefore giving a loud halloo to Sir Humphrey, he rushed into the hut, followed by his servant; and each laying hold of one of the ruffians, held a dagger to his breast, and declared, that if they made any resistance, they would put them to instant death.

The old woman snatched up a large knife, and attempted to stab Devereux; but her husband seizing her by the arm, deprived her of the weapon, and dragging her into an inner apartment, fastened the door.

In the mean time, Bohun and his servant had entered the hut, and assisted in pinioning the robbers. The old cottager lighted a candle,

a candle, and no sooner saw the face of Sir Humphrey Bohun, than, falling on his knees, he made himself known to his old master, with many protestations of his own innocence of the transactions in which, he said, he had no doubt that his wife had been unfortunately engaged, as well as the villains whom they had found under his roof.

Sir Humphrey recognised in the cottager an old servant, of whose honesty and fidelity he had always entertained a good opinion. —“ Robert,” said the Knight, “ speak the truth, and explain the whole business. You know me too well to suppose that I shall either deceive you, or submit to be trifled with myself.”

Robert (for that was the cottager’s name) immediately informed Sir Humphrey, that one evening, on his return from his usual employment, he was accosted at the door of his hut by one of the very men who now lay bound before him, requesting that he might be permitted to shelter himself
from

from the rain, which at that time fell very heavily. Robert consented, and invited the stranger to partake of his humble fare. The night was excessively boisterous, the rain fell in torrents; and as there was no bed for the accommodation of the traveller, he was left sitting up by the fireside, when the cottager and his wife retired to rest.

In the morning, the traveller was gone; and Robert, supposing that he had been in haste to pursue his journey, went as usual to his own work. In the evening, on returning from his employment, he was surprised to meet with the same man, near the spot where he had been accosted by him the night before.

He was now accompanied by two others, who, addressing Robert with as much familiarity as if they had been old acquaintances, said they had brought him some provisions, in return for the hospitality he had shewn to their friend the night before. Without more ceremony, they entered the cottage, and opening a large wallet, pulled
out

out two cheeses, some poultry, and other edibles, of which they invited the cottager, his wife, and son, to partake, assuring them, at the same time, that they should not be in want of such fare, if they would occasionally allow them to make use of their cottage as a retreat.

Robert immediately perceiving that they were freebooters, expostulated with them on the danger to which they subjected themselves by such a course of life; but they derided his remarks, told him to take care of himself, and having finished their repast, quitted his cottage.

From that time he had never seen them until the present evening; but he had heard from his wife that they had frequently been at the hut when he was absent; and found that they had seduced his son, who was a lad about seventeen years of age, from the industrious habits in which he had been brought up, and prevailed upon him to join them in some of their midnight excursions.

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The old man said, that finding all his endeavours to reclaim the unhappy youth counteracted by the encouragement which his mother gave him to continue in his vicious courses, by which she was supplied with the means of indulging in the pernicious habit of drinking to excess, too common among the lower classes, he had been for some time a silent observer of what he could not prevent; but that nothing less than the dreadful alternative of bringing his own son to the gallows, if he did not thus connive at the conduct of the gang, could have prevented him, long ago, from surrendering them to public justice.

Bohun inquired if the men had ever given any account of themselves? The old cottager replied, that two of them had been soldiers in Montfort's army during the late disturbances, and one of them had been a prisoner at Glandon Tower.

"See what comes of being rebels," said the loyal Bohun—"Here, Devereux, I'll warrant

warrant they are some of your Warkworth men."

However, Sir Humphrey was mistaken, for Devereux could not recognise either of them; and when Bohun began to question the robbers themselves, he who appeared to be the principal boldly replied, "Surely, General, you do not expect an old soldier to answer questions, unless to save his life, or obtain his liberty."

"A soldier," said Bohun, "is equally disgraced by cowardice and by dishonesty. He has no business in arms, if he do not possess courage; and he has no temptation to be a thief, but the natural depravity of a base mind. You have been guilty of an outrageous attack on a defenceless female, by robbing her of the food which her industry had procured for the support of her children. You disgrace the character of a soldier by your villainy, and yet dare to lay claim to the honour of a title, of which such scoundrels as you are in every respect unworthy. You have proved your dishonesty:

dishonesty:—I will put your courage to the proof presently.”

A confused noise now announced the return of the servant, accompanied by a posse of rustics from the neighbouring village, some armed with pitchforks, others with bludgeons, and at their head the husband of the poor woman who had been so barbarously treated by the robbers.

Bohun met them at the door of the cottage, and thus addressed them:—“ Good people, the robbers are already secured; therefore nothing remains for you to do but to guard them in safety to the next town, where I hope they will meet with their deserts. However, as one of the ruffians is disposed to be a little impertinent, and boasts of being a soldier, if any of you have a mind to put his courage to the proof, you shall both have fair play, and as the moon shines very bright, it will be a very good opportunity of trying your strength.”

The cottagers, before their arrival at the
wood,

wood, had been informed by the attendant that he belonged to the bold Bohun, by which appellation this veteran warrior was known throughout the whole country, even by the very children, who had been accustomed to recount his deeds in their festive songs. Their eagerness to revenge the injury done to their neighbour was therefore increased, by the opportunity which they expected of seeing a man, of whom they had all heard so much. They had hastened with the utmost alacrity to the spot; and the speech which they had just heard, so congenial to the feelings of the English populace, and so characteristic of the speaker, delighted them so much, that pulling off their caps, they saluted the Knight with long and continued acclamations.

The husband of the poor woman immediately stepped forward, and desired to face his foe. He was a fine athletic fellow, whose nerves were strung by exercise, and his sinews hardened by labour. The robber

being unbound, was now brought forth from the hut; but, on seeing his antagonist, shrunk from the proposed contest, and proved the truth of Bohun's assumption, that he who is capable of offering violence to the defenceless, is seldom possessed of sufficient courage to defend himself.

Bohun now consigned both the culprits to the care of the villagers, with strict injunctions that they did not violate the laws, by attempting an illegal execution of punishment; and having recommended old Robert to be more careful in future respecting the admission of strangers into his cottage, pursued his journey towards Mordeford.

CHAP. IX.

THE return of Sir Humphrey Bohun being soon known by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, they came in a body to welcome their worthy benefactor, and testified their joy by expressions of the warmest attachment.

Sir Humphrey, with his accustomed generosity, set open his cellars, and gave a hospitable reception to every one who entered his gates.

In a few days, Sir Hugh de Bolebec, with his Lady and daughter, accompanied by the Earl of Hereford, and followed by a numerous train of attendants, came, in pur-

suance of the engagement which they had made, to partake of the hospitalities of Mordeford Castle.

Sir Humphrey, who was desirous, above all things, of doing honour to his noble guests, had invited the whole of his tenantry and dependants, to be present at the feast which he made on this occasion.

It was late in the evening before the company arrived at the mansion; and they had no sooner entered the outer court, than all the windows of this extensive building were instantly illuminated, and a number of beautiful rockets let off. The effect was magical, and it was heightened by the pageant which Sir Humphrey and Devereux had contrived as its accompaniment. An immense number of the vassals of Bohun, some dressed like country nymphs and swains, some like sylvan deities, and others habited like the ancient Scythians and other warlike inhabitants of the barbarous ages, presented themselves to the company, and as they passed, offered their gifts—some
corn

corn and fruits, the productions of the earth in early times, when, untilled, it yielded its bounties spontaneously to the possessors of the soil; some the luscious juice of the grape, and the riches of cultivation; others the instruments of war, spears, shields, and magnificent banners, which they laid at the feet of the hero, Sir Hugh de Bolebec, at the entrance of the great hall.

The minstrels attuned their harps, and welcomed the guests with sounds of sweetest melody. A rich repast was provided; and, in short, nothing omitted which could contribute to the gratification of the company. Nor was the festivity confined within the walls of the Castle—oxen roasted whole, and a plentiful distribution of the most substantial fare to the neighbouring villagers, invited them to share the general hilarity.

These scenes of rejoicing continued several days without intermission, and at length only yielded to the calmer enjoy-

ment of social intercourse, uninterrupted by obstreperous mirth, or turbulent conviviality.

It was then that the company began to taste the rational satisfaction of contemplating the beautiful scenery with which Mordeford Castle was surrounded.

The site of the edifice was on the brow of a lofty eminence, whose precipitous sides were everywhere shaggy with woods of the darkest foliage. On the west, a beautiful river foamed among the rocks, at the foot of the bold acclivity which sustained the ivy-mantled turrets of the Castle, from whose windows and battlements the meandering course of the river was visible for several miles. Hills white with sheep, or variegated with cultivation; fields luxuriant in wavy corn, or here and there interspersed with groves and coppices; a rich expanse of sylvan scenery, bordered by a lake, and backed by cerulean hills, whose summits pierced the clouds, terminated the prospect on that side: while in an opposite direction,

direction, the spire of the village church, a mill, a bridge, and the broad and mighty base of "a pine-cap'd mountain," presented a picture unparalleled in the simplicity and grandeur of its effect.

Aided by the cheerfulness of such scenery around them, the natural vivacity of Sir Húmphrey Bohun, and the friendly efforts of the Earl of Hereford and his son, contributed more, in one fortnight, towards the removal of Lady Bolebec's melancholy, than could have been effected amidst the gloom and solemnity of the woods of Glandon, in almost any given time, particularly as the memory was there perpetually recalled to the melancholy event which had filled the family with so much affliction.

The whole country had now begun to feel the effects of peace ; or, in other words, to recover itself from the perturbation and anxiety which had pervaded the mind of every one, either on account of himself, his connexions, or his property.

Agriculture, which, during the late confusion, had been entirely neglected, once more occupied attention; and the care of their flocks and herds reverted to their former keepers, who now exchanged the clangor of the trumpet, and the din of arms, for the bleating of their sheep, and the soft notes of the pastoral pipe.

The season of the year also contributed to the pleasing sensations which these circumstances naturally produced in every humane and generous bosom. The opening spring had clothed the fields in a new tivery of verdure, and renovated the face of nature. The lark hailed the morning of the cottager, and cheered the path which led him to his daily toil. The spiral smoke of his evening fire was a beacon to direct him towards his humble cottage, when the labours of the day were over, and he again sought repose in the bosom of domestic affection and contentment. No cares disturbed his mind, no anxieties perplexed him. The insatiable thirst after riches, and
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the inquietude of disappointed ambition, were to him alike unknown. Such was the life of the cottager in seasons of tranquillity and peace ; and thus,

“ Far from the mad’ning crowd’s ignoble strife;

They held the noiseless tenor of their way.”

Sir Humphrey Bohun and his friends at Mordeford Castle, happy in the society of each other, daily added to the comforts of the neighbourhood, by the exercise of benevolence, and the distribution of charitable assistance amongst those who stood in need of it.

The Lady Bolebec, who had been educated with the strictest regard for the observance of all the social as well as moral duties, was desirous of cultivating in the mind of her daughter the same amiable sensibility and compassion for the sufferings and wants of her fellow-creatures, which afforded to herself the most consolatory gratification, encouraged Isabella to seek for objects of

charity, and to be less fastidious in inquiring into their merits than their distresses.

Her maxim was, first to relieve their wants, and afterwards to inquire into their deserts. She thought that the first was the duty of compassion, implanted by the hand of nature; the latter the inculcation of reason, the effect of intellectual culture. Respecting the first, few errors could be committed, unless by neglecting it. The latter being more liable to mistakes, from deficiency of judgment and from prejudices on the one hand, and fraud and cunning on the other, required more deliberation than is perfectly consistent with the generous impulse of early youth; and therefore, in her opinion, was a less important lesson to be taught at that period.

She thought that a disposition to relieve the wants of the miserable would naturally correct its own exuberances and excess, by those cautions which maturity of years and judgment seldom fails to suggest; and she believed, that the discrimination so often inculcated

inculcated as necessary in the selection of *proper* objects of bounty, is more frequently the result of parsimonious frugality and unfeeling avarice, than of that commendable prudence and regard for the promotion of good morals, to which it is *always* attributed.

The lovely Isabella was therefore early taught, that the emotions of benevolence and compassion were in themselves truly amiable; that distress, whensoever and wheresoever it appeared, had always a claim on her pity and assistance: and thus the natural sensibilities of her mind were nurtured and encouraged, without the danger of checking their growth by the chilling blasts of distrust.

Whilst the proprietor of Mordeford Castle, Bolebec, and Devereux, were enjoying the pleasures of the chase, or amused themselves in hawking or fishing, the fashionable diversions of that age, as pugilism, barouche-driving, and the gaming-table, are of the present day, the Lady

Bolebec and Isabella were alternately employed in those useful avocations by which the habitations of our ancestors at once preserved a memorial of female industry, and were rendered more comfortable and commodious, or visited the neighbouring cottagers, to relieve their necessities, or reward their industry, and thus enjoy "the luxury of doing good."

In these employments, and the innocent recreations of a country life, they passed their time; but still the remembrance of the lost Edward intruded itself, and still diffused a gloom over their brightest prospects, and obscured the natural cheerfulness of health and innocence.

The family of Bolebec had now completed the third month of their residence at Mordeford Castle, and Sir Humphrey Bohun, still desirous of detaining them, every day suggested some new reason for prolonging their visit.

It was in the beginning of summer, when, one fine evening, while Sir Hugh and the

Earl

Earl of Hereford were listening to the relation of some of Bohun's military achievements, which, in common with most old men, he was fond of recounting, the Lady Bolebec and Isabella, accompanied by Devereux, perambulating the grounds which skirted the river, within sight of the Castle, on a sudden descried, on the opposite bank, a man walking about with a very irregular pace, and apparently in great agitation of mind.

Sometimes he approached the water, with a quick and hasty step, as if about to plunge into the stream; then folding his arms, stood motionless, in an attitude of contemplation. On a sudden, turning hastily about, he fled with great precipitancy towards the neighbouring grove, and was lost to their sight among the trees. Again he appeared, and for a few minutes paced to and fro close to the river's brink, wringing his hands, as if overwhelmed with mental anguish.

A sight so unusual attracted their particular

ticular notice; and Devereux proposed to cross the river, and endeavour to discover the cause of so much apparent distress—indeed some interference seemed to be necessary, in order to prevent the perpetration of any rash design upon his own life, which, from the agitation they had witnessed, might be naturally apprehended.

The windows of the Castle were so high, that it was impossible to give notice to the company within of the scene which they had just witnessed; and therefore Lady Bolebec and her daughter agreed to return into the mansion, while Devereux kept his eye upon the stranger, until a boat could be procured to carry him over the river.

A servant was instantly dispatched, with two of those portable boats called coracles, the use of which was extremely common among our forefathers, and is even still retained among the inhabitants of Wales, as admirably adapted for passing rapid and shallow rivers, and capable of being easily removed from place to place.

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The man whom they had seen continued his extravagances on the opposite shore, seemingly absorbed in his own meditations, and totally regardless of their approach.

In the meantime, Lady Bolebec had rejoined Bohun and his party, and informed them of what she had seen. Sir Humphrey told her, that if he had known the circumstance before, he could have saved Devereux the trouble of his voyage, for that the person they had seen was only a poor man, who having in his youth met with a severe disappointment, had fallen into a state of derangement; and having taken up his abode in Holme-wood, on the opposite bank of the river, at some seasons, when more particularly affected by his malady, was accustomed to wander about the vicinage, but without ever attempting any injury to himself or others—"I always call him Merlin," said Sir Humphrey, with a smile, "for the cottagers believe him to be a wizard, and daily resort to him, to solve their doubts, and give them advice respecting

respecting the loss of poultry, the straying of sheep, or the portentous screaming of the night-owl.

“ I wonder,” added the Knight, “ that I never thought of taking you to visit him. You must know, that I often endeavour to bring him to the Castle ; but can seldom prevail upon him to come. However, he is a most extraordinary person, and on every subject, excepting that which immediately relates to the cause of his unfortunate malady, is extremely sensible and well informed.”

As Devereux drew near to the opposite bank of the river, the appearance of the poor man struck him with as much surprise as the extraordinary gesticulations which he had before witnessed. He appeared to be on the verge of fourscore years. A long white beard descended to his girdle. He wore a vest, of which the original colour was entirely undistinguishable, among a thousand different pieces of various kinds, with which it had been coarsely patched ;

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on his head an old velvet cap, in which was stuck a heron's feather; and a piece of scarlet taffety, tied in three knots, appendant from the crown, floated wildly in the wind. But his shoes constituted by far the most extraordinary part of his dress; they had been strengthened, or rather augmented, by the addition of innumerable pieces, fastened upon each other with small nails, until their size was become so unweildy, that nothing but constant use could have enabled the old man to move about with such incumbrances.

An air of melancholy appeared in his countenance; but his wildly-rolling eye still marked the phrenzy of his mind.

He was standing with his hands folded across his heart, looking stedfastly at the eddying surface of the stream, and seemed totally unconscious of the approach of Devereux, until he accosted him with much civility, and entreated to know if the distress which appeared to afflict him would admit of any alleviation from the consolations

tions of friendship, or a sincere desire to afford him assistance?

The old man still kept his eyes fixed on the water, and, without attending to the address of Devereux, continued in a solemn and pathetic tone of voice thus to apostrophize the stream:—

“And thou, too, brawling stream! always murmuring at thy condition! has thy favourite nymph forsaken thee? or complainest thou that thy course is interrupted, as thou hastenest towards the object of thy affection? Is she faithless? is she ungrateful? or does she haughtily despise thy proffered love? Have these beauteous groves, and fields, and flowers, no charms for thee? Have the wildness of the rocks, and the plumage of the birds, whose melodious notes re-echo from the neighbouring hills, no power to sooth thy sorrows, or divert thee from perpetual mourning?—No! no!—Alas, such is thy condition, and such also is mine!”

Then hastily turning from the stream, he
wrung

wrung his hands in silent agony, while the big tears chased each other down his aged cheek.

In an instant, assuming a more tranquil look, and eyeing Devereux with a mixture of surprise and curiosity, as if he had not before seen him—"Stranger, whence come you? Are you too in love? Are you unhappy?"

Devereux, who perceived that the poor man was suffering under a maniacal paroxysm, thought that the most likely method of tranquillizing his "perturbed spirit," was, if possible, to change the subject of his meditations, by the introduction of a new train of ideas; and, with this view, immediately feigning himself to be extremely ill, told the old man, that being afflicted with a severe disease, he had been induced to travel from the remotest part of the country, in search of a physician; and having heard of his great wisdom, now besought his assistance.

Devereux strictly observed the old man's countenance

countenance while he uttered these words; and perceiving that his agitation gradually subsided, as his attention was engaged by a new set of ideas, proceeded with a long story of pretended sufferings; and at length told the old man, that he had dreamed of obtaining a cure, by coming to the spot which he now visited, where it was represented to him that he would find an aged person, who would accompany him to a neighbouring castle, and there give such directions as would effectually remove his maladies.

“ This is very strange indeed,” said the old man—“ I was going to ask who could tell you of me; but it must have been the *Black Spirit* that walks by night:—and he shall be obeyed. However, you must know, young man, that I never go into a boat, and therefore we must either ford the river, or else go round by the bridge; for there is no other inhabited castle in this neighbourhood, besides that of Sir Humphrey Bohun, which you see before you; therefore

therefore it must be that whither I am to conduct you."

Devereux, supposing that it would be in vain to attempt to persuade the old man to step into the coracle, gave his servant a signal to cross the river, that Sir Humphrey Bohun might be informed of the arrival of so extraordinary a visitor. Then turning towards the bridge, which, though at a considerable distance, was within sight, would have directed his course that way; but was withheld by the old man, who again expressed a desire to ford the river.

Devereux, who had no great inclination for being wet, and ignorant of the depth of the water, gently remarked, that as the evening was remarkably fine, the walk would be pleasant; and, still keeping in view the character which he had assumed, of a sick person, added, that if the way was not very long, he thought he should reach the Castle without much difficulty.

"Come, come," said the old man, "none of your excuses. If I am to be your physician,

sician, you must obey my directions. The water will not hurt me; and it is one of the best remedies in the world for the complaints which you have described." And so saying, he laid hold of the arm of Devereux, and, stepping into the stream, walked boldly towards the opposite bank.

Devereux having thus embarked in the adventure, was determined to pursue it; rather than fail in the completion of his design, which was to bring the old man to the Castle, where, not imagining that he was known, he naturally supposed that his grotesque habit and eccentricity would afford an interesting entertainment. He however anticipated the merriment which would be created at his own expence among his friends at Mordeford, if he got a complete soaking, and therefore offered to divest himself of his clothes before he followed the old man; but the latter would not hear of any such thing, and insisted upon his patient walking through with all his clothes on.

Rather

Rather than offend the old man, he therefore complied.

The middle of the stream was very deep, and the current so strong, that it was with difficulty Devereux could keep himself on his legs; the old man, however, assuring him, at every step, that the state of his health would be much benefited by this process; and, as soon as they had gained the opposite side, gathered a few leaves of some herb, which grew near the water's edge, and, gravely pronouncing a few words over them, by way of charm, desired his patient to eat them.

Devereux, apprehensive, from this specimen, that the number of the old man's remedies would exceed that of his own pretended complaints, thought it convenient to tell him, that he already thought himself much better.

Having ascended the steep path which led to one of the private entrances of the Castle, the old man desired Devereux to remain there, whilst he went into the mansion,

sion, and requested permission to introduce him—"For," said he, "Sir Humphrey Bohun is as generous as a prince, but I never visit him, unless on particular occasions, and therefore cannot take the liberty of introducing a stranger, without first obtaining his permission."

Sir Humphrey having understood, from the servant, that Devereux had contrived to induce the old man to accompany him to the Castle, and knowing that whenever he came thither, it was his usual custom to ford the river, had anticipated the condition in which his guests might be expected to arrive.

The old man, entering the steward's apartment, desired that Sir Humphrey Bohun might be informed of his coming, and that there was a young stranger who required his hospitality. Bohun immediately gave orders for their admission; but requested that his guests would not, on any account, oppose the old man in the directions which he might give respecting Devereux,

Devereux, as he said it would put the old man out of temper, and spoil the amusement of the evening.

The garments of the adventurers were yet dripping with wet, when they entered Mordeford Castle; but Devereux was perhaps the most rueful figure, for the old man had been so much accustomed to wade through the river, that he seemed totally regardless of the condition of his clothes, and was as unembarrassed as if nothing uncommon had occurred; while Devereux, who was not naturally fond of the water, could scarcely dissemble his vexation, at having thus been the dupe of his own scheme; nor was it without embarrassment that he encountered the sarcastic glance of his friend Sir Humphrey, when the Knight welcomed him to the Castle, with as much formality as if he had never seen him before.

“Merlin,” said Sir Humphrey, at his entrance, “you have been in the bath, I see.”

“ Yes,” replied the old man ; “ but it was entirely on account of the young gentleman, who is much benefited by it already—

‘ There are who teach

Truths they not feel, nor practise what they preach ;’

but, for my part, my own feelings are always the rule of my actions towards others ; and whatsoever I recommend to my patients, I am always ready to submit to myself.

“ Now, Sir Humphrey, I am sure you do not expect any apologies for the trouble I may have occasioned, by coming to Mordeford Castle, in order to restore this young gentleman to a good state of health. You see he is in a very wretched condition at present.”

Sir Humphrey and his guests could scarcely forbear smiling ; and Devereux, who was completely wet through, blushed assent.

“ Pray, Sir Knight,” continued the old man, “ let the stranger be put to bed immediately,

mediately, and give him a cup of wine, and, if your cook can prepare it, a mess of *dalegrout*."

"And do you mean to follow the same prescription yourself?" said Sir Humphrey, giving a glance at the old man's wet clothes.

"Not exactly," replied the old man, totally indifferent about the state of his dress—"You know I never touch wine, and cannot get *dalegrout*; which, by the by, is only fit for a king or a nobleman: but I suppose this young man is no mean person, or the black spirit would not have sent him to me."

"Lose no time," said Sir Humphrey, addressing himself to Devereux, "in following Merlin's prescription. Get you to bed, and the chamberlain shall prepare the *dalegrout*."

Devereux withdrew; and Sir Humphrey presented Merlin to his guests, who were equally astonished at his appearance and manners. The former bespoke the un-

happy state of his mind ; the latter evinced that he had formerly conversed in the world, and among the superior ranks of life.

He was at once an interesting and melancholy proof of the predominating influence of a passion, which in every age has bid defiance to the calm suggestions of reason, prudence, and reflection, which gains strength by resistance, which time cannot cure, and is only vanquished by death.

“ Merlin,” said Sir Humphrey, carelessly, “ I have often told you, that I thought you very much resembled Simon de Montfort. I wish you would put on one of my buff coats, and a pair of military buskins ; we would then take the opinion of this Lady on the subject, who was well acquainted with the Earl.”

“ Certainly,” said the old man ; and immediately retired, in order to be equipped in a suit of the Knight’s.

This was, however, only a feint, to induce
him

him to change his wet clothes, which, if attempted in a more direct manner, would probably have been either altogether ineffectual, or perhaps occasioned his immediately quitting the Castle in disgust.

When the old man returned to the room, habited in his new dress, his aspect and manner so well accorded, that there could not remain any doubt of his having formerly been accustomed to a military dress. This, however, was a string on which Sir Humphrey well knew it would be dangerous to touch; and as the presence of the company, particularly of the Lady Bolebec, seemed to restrain him from any irregularities of behaviour, at least at present, they were content with telling him, that he was so exact a resemblance of the Earl of Leicester, that, bating the difference of their ages, it would have been dangerous for him to have fallen in with any of the King's army, during the late hostilities, unless they were strangers to the person of Montfort.

“ I never go far from home,” said the old man ; “ nor should I have ventured out to-night, if the black spirit had not commanded it.”

“ Pray, who is this black spirit?” said Sir Humphrey.

“ It is rather a figurative expression than a descriptive one,” replied the old man ; “ and yet I have some doubts whether it be merely a spectre.—However,” continued he, “ it is so exact in the performance of its engagements, that I cannot, dare not, slight its orders.”

CHAP. X.

“ You excite my curiosity very much,” said the Earl of Hereford. “ It might not be proper to ask an explanation ; but if you feel at liberty to say anything more on the subject, although your friend Sir Humphrey Bohun is very incredulous respecting such affairs, I, like you, entertain doubts whether they may not be sometimes entitled to our attention ; and should profit by your remarks.”

The old man surveyed the Earl with great seriousness ; then turning to Sir Humphrey, inquired who was the person that had spoken to him?

On being told that it was the Earl of Hereford, he fetched a deep sigh ; but instantly recovering himself, said, with much dignity, “ My Lord, your name is well known to me ; and I am glad to find that a nobleman of your talents is disposed to think seriously on a subject, which persons of far inferior minds too often venture to ridicule. Sir Humphrey Bohun has known me for many years, and I believe will bear testimony of my inoffensive way of life. It is not for me to attempt to argue him out of his disbelief that a secret intelligence subsists between the intellectual part of our nature, and that mind, although invisible, is capable of maintaining intercourse with mind, without the medium of corporeal agency or intervention ; but although I may fail in producing conviction in the mind of any one present, I am satisfied that neither the Earl of Hereford, nor Sir Humphrey Bohun, will ridicule me for the bias my mind has received, when I relate the occasion of it. It will not, however, go
entirely

entirely to the length I have just assumed ; but it is at least sufficient to impress my mind very forcibly, that the corporeal senses may be imposed upon by incorporeal agency, and that mental operations are perfectly independent of organization.

“ Whatever may have been my faults or my misfortunes, I cannot accuse myself of having cherished any unmanly fears, or superstitious notions. One who has lived in a hermitage for forty years, almost wholly excluded from human converse, one who passes whole months (nights as well as days) in perfect solitude, and listens to the howling of the wintry wind, without a single wish to visit the busy scenes of active life—nay, who has resisted all the efforts which have been made to draw him from his lonely cell, and the banks of his beloved river ; such a person, my Lord, is not likely to be scared by midnight sprites, or to cherish those ideal fancies, which weakness and terror have conjured up to affright and terrify the mind.

“ My Lord, I am one of those unfortunate persons who are considered by the rest of the world to be under the influence of that intellectual disease called madness ; but you know the same was said of Democritus, who, like me, was also a philosopher, if not a physician.”

The whole company (excepting Bohun) listened in silent astonishment, on hearing him thus touch on his own unfortunate malady ; but Sir Humphrey had frequently heard him discuss the nature of it, with the utmost composure and ingenuity, when the bare mention of the cause that produced it would throw him into the wildest extravagances and incoherence. On every other subject but this, he was capable of discoursing in the most interesting and instructive manner ; and possessed a fund of knowledge, which added to the impressiveness of his eloquence.

The old man again fetched a deep sigh, and thus proceeded :—

“ You perhaps may have heard, my Lord,
that

that some such unhappy persons never sleep, not even for years. I believe that this may have been the case with myself. At all events, it is the impossibility of ascertaining whether I have slept or not, that occasions my doubts on the subject now under discussion. I am persuaded in my own mind, that when the circumstances happened which I am about to relate, I was broad awake, as much so as I am now. If I am mistaken, you must account for the events which I shall describe; for as they admit of proof, it will be equally unfair and useless to pretend not to believe them, without having submitted them to the test of your own experience."

"Aye," said Sir Humphrey, "this is something like. On this condition, I will myself become a convert; but when you talk of the dragon of Mordeford, you know that you always declare tradition to be a sufficient proof of its existence, without monstrative evidence."

"With your leave, we will wave that
M 6 subject,"

subject," said Merlin—"At the present, I will only relate what has happened, and submit myself to your indulgence, with respect to the degree of credit due to my veracity in the relation. The principal fact, I repeat it, is capable of proof.

"It is now a considerable time ago, for the weather was very cold, and the nights dark, when, as I was reclining on my rushy pallet, as I suppose, about midnight, I heard a voice calling to me from the door of my hut.

"Supposing that it was one of those poor people who often resort to me, alike for the purpose of bringing me provisions, of which their kindness never allows me to be in want, or in order to solicit my poor advice about their own little concerns, for they give me credit for having more sense than themselves, although they believe me mad, I inquired, 'who it was that called?'—'Father,' replied the voice, whispering in my ear, though I had never heard the person come into the hermitage, and the

wicker door was closed, 'I ask your charity; and if you have any provisions in store, and any feeling for the distressed, I conjure you to relieve my wants.'

"I was, I confess, much startled by this address, and involuntarily stretched out my hand towards the person who spoke to me; when, to my great surprise, I could find no one; and examining the door, it was perfectly safe, as I had left it when I retired to my couch.

"While I was musing on the strangeness of the occurrence, the voice again whispered to me, 'If you have any Christian charity, do not suffer an unfortunate person to perish for want.'—I immediately asked, 'Where is he who speaks?' but no answer was returned. Again I searched the hut; but there was no person save my wretched self. I opened the door, and called aloud; but the moon was obscured by thick clouds, so that I could discern nothing, and solemn stillness reigned.

"I might

“ I might have thought this an illusion, I might have supposed it a dream ; but mark what followed !—A third time the same voice renewed its supplication, even close in mine ear. I will confess, that there was something so unaccountable in this repeated address from an invisible, that a thrilling horror seized me, such as I had never before felt. ‘ What wouldst thou ? ’ said I ; ‘ tell me, and if it be not sinful, I will obey. ’—‘ Set some of your provisions at the door,’ said the voice, ‘ and hereafter I will explain myself. ’—I accordingly arose, opened the door, and placed on the outside a loaf and a pitcher of milk, which one of the cottagers had brought to me on the preceding day. I closed the door, and retired to my couch.

“ When the morning dawned, my wandering mind prompting me to a renewal of my accustomed walks, I opened the door—the loaf and the pitcher were both gone.

“ The

“ The day passed, and on the night following the same voice again addressed me : ‘ You are benevolent,’ said the voice, ‘ therefore I will be just : your pitcher is at the door ; but I have still need of your assistance.’—‘ Tell me then,’ said I, ‘ who and what you are?’—‘ I am,’ said the voice, ‘ and I am not.’—‘ Art thou then a spirit?’ said I.—‘ Dost thou not see me?’ said the voice, audibly, and in a tone which conveyed the idea of the person who spoke being of very low stature, and standing near the bedside.—I answered, ‘ No.’ The spirit, if it be a spirit, then laughed aloud.—‘ I will do thee no harm,’ said the voice, again whispering in my ear ; ‘ I am the Black Spirit of the Wye ! By that name shalt thou know me.’—‘ If thou art insubstantial,’ said I, ‘ what need hast thou of food?’—‘ It is not for myself,’ replied the voice, still whispering ; ‘ but for an unfortunate woman, who is at the point of death.’—I asked where was her abode?—‘ In the ruins of Rosemont

mont Castle,' said the voice ; ' but, as thou valuest thy life,' continued the spirit, ' I command thee never to approach those ruins.'—' My life, black spirit,' I rejoined, ' has long been of so little value, that no apprehensions of losing it will deter me from immediately going to the ruins. Wheresoever there be distress, thither let me hasten, that by seeing the sufferings of others, I may learn, with more patience, to endure my own."

Here the old man sighed deeply, and seemed much affected.

" I instantly arose, and going to the door, attempted to open it ; but found that it was held by a strong hand ; and, at the same instant, the groan of a person, as if in great agony, proceeding from the bed I had just quitted, distressed me beyond expression.

" I returned to the pallet ; but as no one was there, my surprise was heightened into consternation, although I did not know that I had any thing to fear.

' Black

‘ Black spirit,’ said I, ‘ let me conjure thee, by that Power before whom all created beings ought to tremble; distract me not thus by foul incantations. If thou be some damned sprite, wandering from the yawning sepulchre, to which, by thine own hand, thou hadst forced an untimely admission, hie thee to the guilty wretch, who, pointing the glittering steel to the bosom of the way-worn traveller, seeks by midnight rapine the support of his wretched life; awaken him to repentance, by the terrors of thy remorse; and teach him, by thine own sufferings, to avoid the murderer’s fate! —But come not hither, to the miserable hut of poverty.’

“ I was proceeding in my adjuration, when a piercing shriek rent my very soul; and the bare remembrance of it, even at this distance of time, makes me tremble. I called again upon the black spirit; but received no answer. I commended myself to the care of Providence, and became tranquil.

tranquil. My conscience did not upbraid me:—whom then should I fear?

“ In the morning, the pitcher was standing at the door, and in it several pieces of silver. After what had passed, was it superstitious that I would not touch the money? I threw it on the ground with indignation; I washed the pitcher in the pure spring, which pours its translucent stream through the rocks at the door of my hermitage, and was on the point of departing to visit the ruins of Rosemont Castle, when one of the neighbouring peasants came to my abode, to consult me respecting the loss of one of his kids. This was the third complaint of the same kind which the man had made, in the course of as many weeks. His goats were herded on that side of the country bordering upon Rosemont. I inquired if any one lived at the Castle, or if he had searched the ruins for his lost kids? He replied, that he dared not approach the place; that nobody lived there;

there; but dreadful shrieks were often heard, which terrified the casual passenger; and spectres had been seen, by moonlight, emerging from the bushes with which the ruins were inclosed. I was aware of the superstition which prevailed respecting this spot; but it was fixed and rooted in the minds of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, and I had in vain endeavoured to remove their fears, by enlightening their understanding.

“ I told the man to come again the next day. As soon as he had departed, I took my staff, and hastened towards Rosemont. Scarcely had I proceeded half a mile, before a severe storm of thunder and lightning came on, which increased to so great a degree of violence, that a knotted oak, one of the primeval occupiers of the forest, was shivered to pieces, within a few paces of the place where I stood. My mind was agitated—I returned to my hut.

“ Perhaps it was superstitious in me to
have

have made the storm an excuse for not visiting the ruins ; but I will not deny that I did so.

“ A few nights afterwards, the same voice again whispered. I made no reply. The voice became more audible. It proceeded from the couch on which I lay. I had been so much accustomed to this nocturnal visitor, that I was more angry than afraid. Perhaps I was peevish that day. I arose softly, and, taking my staff in my hand, suddenly threw open the door. The moon shone bright : but I could not discern any person. The voice again addressed me from the chair on which I usually sat, and called to me familiarly, ‘ Sit down a little, and let us converse together.’—I looked round, but could see no one. The voice proceeded—‘ It is to no purpose that you look for an invisible.’—‘ Cursed spirit !’ I replied, ‘ if thou wilt not render thyself apparent, I will henceforth remain silent to thy hateful voice.’—The voice again called me.

“ Perplexed

“ Perplexed and angry at the unaccountableness of the scene, and at being thus continually disturbed, I smote the chair with the staff in my hand, with considerable force. A scream immediately issued from it, as if the blow had fallen upon an infant ; and the scream being over, the invisible distinctly sobbed.

“ I was now more astonished than ever, and again demanded what the spirit wanted ? — ‘ Corporeal food,’ said the voice, whispering as usual in my ear.

“ I fetched another loaf, and placed it at the door. I believe it was a tribute to impurity, rather than a gift of charity. I shut the door, and returned to my couch. The voice again addressed me in a distinct and audible manner, as if standing close to my bedside.— ‘ Father, be less desirous, in future, of examining into the condition of a suppliant, than of relieving him. The encouragement of distrust makes the heart callous, and steels it against the miseries of
our

our fellow-creatures. To convince thee that thou hast not given to one who needs it not, to-morrow, at mid-day, place thyself on the summit of the hill, and attentively regard the scene before thee; but, as thou valuest thy repose, the tranquillity of thy retirement, attempt not to approach or to address those whom thou shalt see.'—The voice ceased.

“ The spirit had now touched the right spring. He had, by reiterated importunity, made even the stillness of night, in which my soul had formerly rejoiced, troublesome and uneasy. Dared I then to disobey him?

“ I attended at the appointed time. The day was gloomy; dark clouds hung upon the neighbouring mountains, alternately spreading themselves over the surface of the ground, and anon contracting into vast and awful pillars, on which the dome of Heaven seemed to rest.

“ I placed

“ I placed myself on the summit of the hill. About thirty paces from where I stood, a rock, partly denuded of its mossy covering, by the chilling blasts of the furious east wind, might, by a vivid imagination, have been converted into the likeness of a human figure. While I was contemplating it, a gentle breeze sprang up, and wafted away the murky clouds by which it had been partly obscured. I then distinctly saw a female figure sitting on a projecting ledge of the rock, with a young child in her arms. The countenance of the woman was as the face of one who has but a short time to live. Pale disease seemed to have nearly completed its last ravages, and the deepest melancholy sat upon her brow.

“ She arose, but her tottering limbs seemed unable to support even her emaciated frame. She essayed to walk, but could not. A tall man at this instant came from behind the rock ; and taking hold of
the

the wretched woman, assisted her to remove towards a small opening, which I then, for the first time, perceived amongst the rocks. As they walked along; I heard the voice of the female distinctly say, ‘And is there no possibility of his escape, nor of my return?’—‘Urge me no more,’ said her conductor; ‘have I not already told you I will make one effort more? but whatever be the event, remember I have preserved your life.’—They entered the narrow opening between the rocks, and were hidden from my sight.

“There was no illusion here. I would have followed them, and had actually proceeded to the verge of the entrance, when the voice, to which I had been so much accustomed, that it was impossible for me to mistake it, whispered very audibly, ‘Remember the power of the black spirit.’—I hesitated, paused, and returned.

“Satisfied that there was real distress, although I was wholly unacquainted with
the

the cause of it, the words of the black spirit sunk deep into my mind.

“Bread, milk, or vegetables, I regularly placed at the door of my hermitage. I asked no questions, and the spirit ceased to be troublesome.

“During all the years that I had occupied my retirement, I had never heard of any cave or hiding-place among the rocks. Engaged by my own melancholy reflections, I had never thought of attempting to explore their recesses. My object was rather to avoid company, than to seek for it. Curiosity, however, to know the history of the unfortunate, struggled continually with the involuntary awe which I had, and still have, for the supernatural agency of the black spirit; and one night, having repeated my earnest entreaty that the voice would satisfy my doubts on this subject, I received the following emphatical reply:—

‘The woman whom thou hast seen is

pinning away, under the influence of disease, credulity, and disappointment. The child is of noble race ; and the lives of many are interested in his concealment. That no trace of their abode might lead to detection, thou hast been made the instrument of furnishing provisions for their support ; and the black spirit is their guard. Be content, be secret, nor reveal to mortal man what thou hast now heard, till that day when a stranger shall visit thee from a distant country, who, without knowing the mystery of this transaction himself, shall be the instrument of its explanation.'

" I continued to appropriate a portion of my humble provisions to the use of the unknown. I have also forborne to make any inquiries, or to attempt the farther investigation of what it perhaps does not concern me to know. A few days since, the pitcher, which I found returned, as usual, at the door of my hermitage, had two bright pieces of gold at the bottom of it.

Money

Money is of no use to me : I threw it away, as I had done the silver before. My nightly visitor came no more. The pitcher and the loaf have since remained untouched. The arrival of the young gentleman who accompanied me hither, I imagine to be the accomplishment of the black spirit's prophecy. I thought myself at liberty to give this account ; and it will, I hope, convince those who have heard it, that there are some secret monitions which ought not to be despised, some invisible agencies, which we ought not to deny or disregard."

The hermit ceased. Sir Hugh, the Earl of Hereford, and Bohun, looked at each other in expressive silence ; but the Lady Bolebec, who had retired to a seat on the opposite side of the room, had become insensible to the concluding sentences. Struck by a variety of circumstances, as the old man proceeded, she had felt a lively interest in the relation ; but when he spoke of the woman and the child, the conviction

that they were the dear lost Edward and his nurse whom the hermit had seen, flashed upon her mind; and, no longer able to support her feelings, she sunk down motionless on the seat, where she remained unobserved, till, at the conclusion of the story, which had struck every one present with the same idea, though with different degrees of force, the eyes of every one were directed to her Ladyship.

Her pallid and lifeless countenance was a sufficient answer to this spontaneous appeal. The company hastened to her assistance; and the old man, who naturally attributed what he saw to the impression made by his narrative, although ignorant of the true cause of Lady Bolebec's being so much interested in it, was agitated with extreme distress, at having been the involuntary occasion of so much uneasiness.

The Lady Bolebec, however, soon began to revive; the current of life was restored to its wonted channel; and though her
heart

heart still palpitated with violence, and her nerves still vibrated with excess of sensibility, a flood of tears, in a short time, relieved the first violent emotions of returning hope.

While Sir Hugh de Bolebec and Bohun, with the attendants, were endeavouring to tranquillize the mind of Lady Bolebec, the venerable Hereford, taking the old hermit into an adjoining apartment, briefly informed him of the loss of Edward de Bolebec; and the distress which the old man had previously felt, was instantaneously converted into an ardent hope, that he might be the happy instrument of restoring the lost infant to his afflicted parents.

Bohun having witnessed the revival of the Lady Bolebec, hastened to the apartment of Devereux. At the sound of his friend's voice, Devereux, who expected that Sir Humphrey had come for the purpose of rallying him on his aquatic adventure, was equally delighted and surprised.

prised at the consequences which had been the result of the innocent deception that he had practised, in order to bring the hermit to Mordeford Castle; and although it was the hour of midnight, could scarcely be prevented from immediately setting out in quest of the child.

Bohun was so well acquainted with the strict veracity of Merlin, that although he would have been better satisfied with the story, had it been devoid of what he considered the extravagant episode of the black spirit, he knew that every tittle of the narrative might be depended upon.

The bias of the old man's mind, and the repeated and frequent paroxysms of his unfortunate malady, often interrupted, and sometimes perverted, his judgment; but the sincerity of his disposition, and correctness of his memory, were unimpeachable.

However, at the same time that the intelligence which had been thus unexpectedly procured seemed likely at least to lead
to

to such a discovery as might remove their present uncertainty respecting the child, it by no means followed, that the restoration of the infant to his parents would be the necessary consequence.

Conjecture must still supply the want of more perfect information, and much might yet depend upon the sagacity and prudence of those who were employed in the subsequent attempts to trace this extraordinary business through the intricacies in which it was enveloped.

Among the difficulties which suggested themselves on this subject, that which appeared to Bohun of primary importance was, to dispossess the mind of Merlin of the awe and respect which he acknowledged that he still entertained for the supposed black spirit; for unless this could be effected, it might still be difficult to engage the old man in the undertaking, in which his assistance seemed to be in some measure necessary.

Sir

Sir Humphrey Bohun having communicated this hint to Devereux, it was resolved that the Earl of Hereford, whose suggestion had originally paved the way for the disclosure which the hermit had already made, should, by renewing the conversation, endeavour to make some farther discovery respecting what Merlin called "the Black Spirit;" for notwithstanding this part of the subject was at present inexplicable, both Sir Humphrey and the Earl concurred in the belief, that some plot lurked beneath this veil of mystery, and that the black spirit, if not the principal, was at all events one of the agents of the confederacy.

Hereford prefaced his intended inquiries by assuring the old hermit, that, under all the circumstances of the case, he should have himself entertained the same opinion as that which he had imbibed with regard to the black spirit; and, therefore, that he trusted that any questions which he might suggest, would be deemed the result of an earnest

earnest desire to arrive at the truth, and not attributed to any doubts respecting the possibility of intellectual agency, and incorporeal intercourse.

The sagacious Hereford well knew, that the true method of subduing prejudices, is by seeming to connive at them, until the hand which is employed to root them out can obtain a firm and powerful grasp. Direct opposition is, therefore, seldom successful in its efforts to extirpate errors, or change opinions. The mind becomes alarmed at the attempt. It regards the attack made upon it as a sort of insult, at which it revólts, more perhaps from the innate pride of self-complacency, than from any conviction of propriety of sentiment, or any consciousness of intrinsic superiority.

The old hermit, who had already conceived a great respect for the Earl of Hereford, felt no small degree of pleasure at the declaration he had made. The avenues which
lead

lead to the heart are never effectually closed against the admission of flattery, if well adapted, and skilfully applied. Time, which renders these avenues impervious to a variety of ideas connected with the different passions, inclinations, and feelings, of human creatures, always leaves sufficient room for those sentiments which are calculated to sooth our vanity, and gratify our pride. Even when the mind itself has become diseased, this principle still adheres to it in all its aberrations, and is inseparable from it in every condition.

Hereford, like the black spirit, had touched the right spring. Merlin's heart expanded ; and, although at other times apt to take offence at every question which related to himself or his assertions, readily entered upon the desired investigation ; and, in reply to the interrogatories of the Earl, farther informed him, that the black spirit had never visited him in the day-time, nor had ever manifested himself by
any

any other method than the varied modulations of different human voices, as before related.

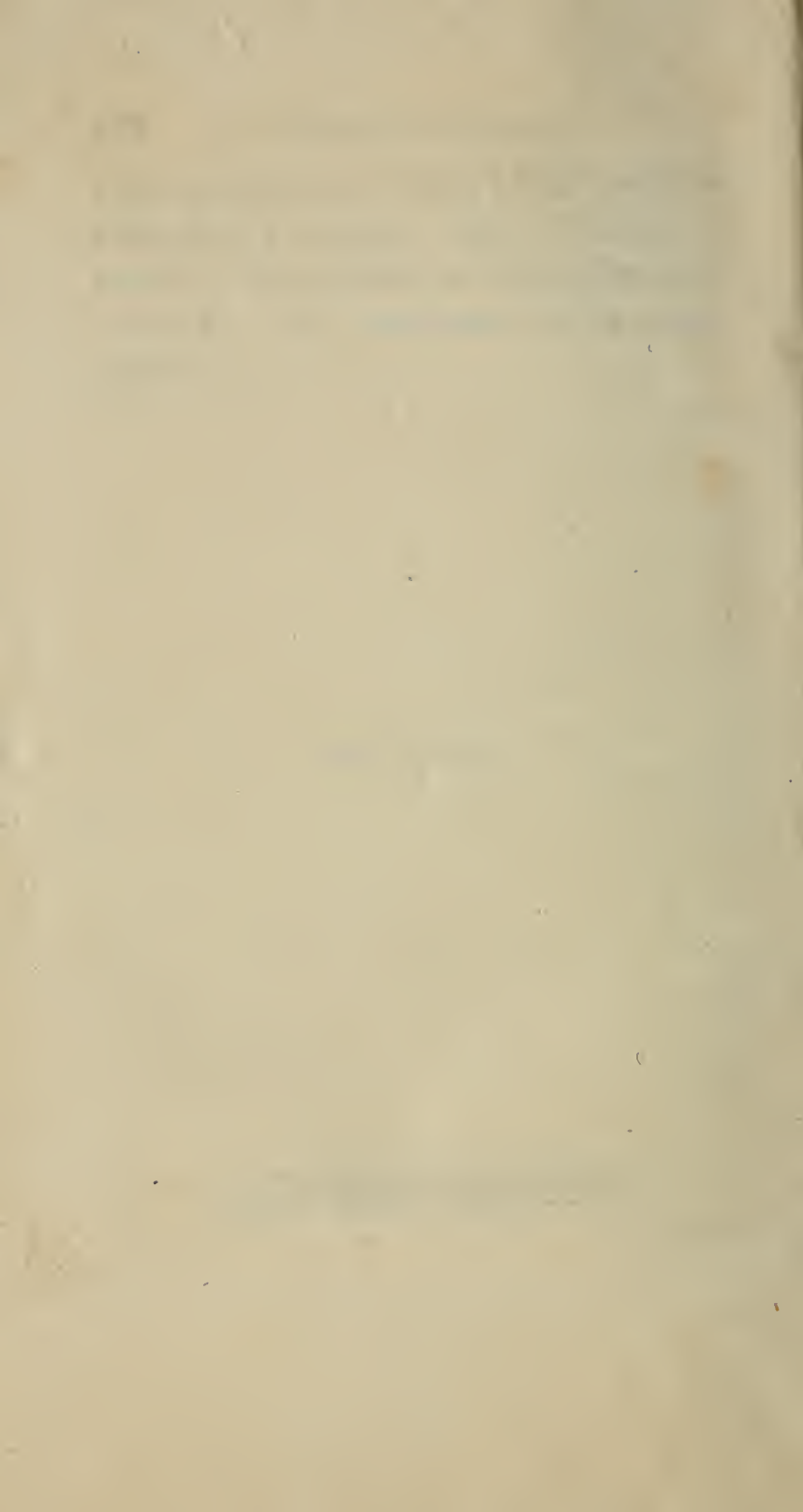
He said, that having made no promise to the spirit, he was not under any other obligation to secrecy, nor to abstain from attempting to discover the unfortunate woman and child, than what had arisen from the ascendancy which the invisible had gained over his mind, by the power of disturbing him in his beloved solitude.

That, believing the invisible to be a benevolent spirit, he had thought it his duty to obey the impulse which his mind had involuntarily imbibed : that it was in conformity with what he understood to be the desire of the same spirit, (whether good or bad), that he had disclosed the circumstances which had happened ; and presuming that it would lead to a development of the whole affair, he was now ready to afford any assistance in his power to the young gentleman, whom he considered to have

been intended by the black spirit, when he mentioned a stranger, who, " though ignorant of the mystery of the transaction," was to be " the instrument of its explanation."

END OF VOL. I.

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